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POEMS

FROM

JOHN O'GROAT'S,

BY

JAMES TRAILL CALDER,

AUTHOR OF "SKETCHES FROM JOHN O'GROATS," &c.

From where, upon the rocky Caithness strand,
Breaks the long wave that at the pole began.—TENNANT.

WICK:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY P. REID,
AND SOLD BY HIM, AND BY W. RAE, WICK; MISS RUSSELL,
THURSO; W. REID, KIRKWALL; AND W. SMITH, TAIN.

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1855

P R E F A C E .

IT was the Author's original intention to publish a collected edition of all his poems ; but, circumstances which it is unnecessary to mention here, induced him to abandon that idea. In the present volume, however, though, in consequence, somewhat restricted in size, will be found a number of new pieces which were not printed in any of his former works. The leading poem, "The Mermaid of Dwarwick Head," founded on a curious local legend, is one of these. From the general diffusion of education, and its enlightening influence on the public mind, the belief in mermaids, fairies, and the other fanciful creations of a byegone and credulous age, is now well nigh extinct, even among the lowest vulgar ; and, as this source of imaginative poetry may in some measure be said to be done away, the Author is fully sensible that in making a fabulous being, like the mermaid, the subject of a pretty long poem, he lays himself open to critical censure. Still, as everything connected with humanity is more or less interesting, and as the legend in question is a remarkable one, and at the same time conveys an excellent moral, he has ventured to put it in a metrical dress. The fairy creed, in which may be included the mermaid, formed an original and beautiful mythology of its kind ; and had such a mode of superstitious belief not existed, Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, never would have produced that exquisite effusion of genius, his "Bonny "Kilmeny." Burns was too earnest and impassioned, too deeply

interested in the poetry of the human heart, and of real life—which, after all, is the only true poetry—to deal much in the ideal world ; yet he has devoted the opening stanza of his “Halloween” to a brief description of the moonlight revels of the “aerial people” on that momentous night once “so big with prophecy” to the youth of both sexes among the peasantry of Scotland.

Of the Author’s poems which have already appeared, “St. Mary’s Fair” is considerably enlarged, and now includes an amusing episode descriptive of one of the peculiar superstitions of the time in which the scene is laid. This, and the poem entitled “Birkie’s Bridal,” are chiefly intended to serve as a record of past manners and obsolete customs in the “far north ;” and as such may be of some little value in an antiquarian or statistical point of view. The great Caithness fair—*sic transit gloria mundi*—is now but a shadow of what it was at one period ; and the old country wedding, so picturesque, so hearty, and full of social merriment, is among the things that were.

Of late years a new school of poetry—a complete antithesis of the old—has sprung up, of which the distinguishing characteristics are extreme intensity of language, Ossianic metaphor, isolated brilliancy, and abstruse metaphysical disquisition on all sorts of subjects sacred and profane. In juxtaposition with the transcendental effusions of this school, the Author of this small volume is aware, that his rhymes will appear tame and trivial, but he believes they will have one merit at least—they will be intelligible.

JOHN O’GROAT’S,
May, 1855.

CONTENTS.

	<i>Page.</i>
THE MERMAID OF DWARWICK HEAD,	1
ST. MARY'S FAIR,	18
ROBERT THE BRUCE IN THE ISLE OF RACHRIN,	44
QUEEN MARY'S ESCAPE FROM LOCHLEVEN CASTLE,	47
THE PIPER OF MURKLE,	50
THE CLAIRVOYANT IN INDIA,	56
TASSO AND THE MOUNTAIN ROBBER,	59
CARACTACUS—THE BRITISH CHIEF,	61
MARGARET LAMBRUN AND QUEEN ELIZABETH,	64
LEONIDAS AT THERMOPYLÆ,	67
ARIADNE,	70
THE DROVER,	73
THE WIDOW OF RONA,	92
THE MAIDEN OF NORWAY,	94
THE CHAMOIS HUNTER,	96
ON HEARING THE HIGHLAND BAGPIPE,	100
TO THE SKY-LARK,	101
RICHARD CŒUR DE LION,	102
ON VISITING DWARWICK HEAD,	104
LADY CAITHNESS AND THE MESSENGER FROM FLODDEN,	105
ODE TO SPRING,	108
ON VISITING MELROSE,	109
CAMOENS,	111
THE YOUNG SOLDIER,	113
ON SEEING IN EDINBURGH A "JOHN O'GROAT'S BUCKIE,"	115
THE WIND,	117
THE BROKEN HEART,	118
THE SPIRIT OF THE OCEAN'S SONG,	120
TO THE SPIRIT OF BURNS,	122

	<i>Page.</i>
THE SOLDIER'S BRIDE—Canto First,	124
" " Canto Second,.. .. .	137
" " Canto Third,	147
THE ENCHANTED ISLAND,	156
HELEN OF BRAEMORE,	168
BIRKIE'S BRIDAL,	176
MACROARY, THE GREAT PREACHER,	189
PAULINA VANDERSNOOKS,	191
EVENING SKY,	198
THE ANGEL OF THE THUNDER-STORM,	200
THE GREEK MOURNER OF JERUSALEM,	201
ON THE DEATH OF THOMAS CAMPBELL,	202
TO JOHN O'GROAT'S,	203

ERRATA.

- Page 16, stanza 59, line 1, for "there, with," read "therewith."
,, 72, line 2, for "woods." read "wood."
,, 87, stanza 58, line 5, for "now," read "more."
,, 122, stanza 4, line 2, for "on," read "in."



POEMS.

The Mermaid of Dwarwick Head.

A LEGENDARY POEM.

“Oh! cursed lust of gold! when for thy sake
The fool throws up his interest in both worlds.”—BLAIR.

I.

My harp, late flung aside, once more I tune,
To sing a legend of the days of yore,
When fairies, lighted by the silver moon,
Tripped the green sward with flowers embroidered o'er;
When Mermaids coy, oft-times, at hour of noon,
Sat basking in the sun along the shore,
And combed their flowing locks and sweetly sang,
Till cliff and cavern with their numbers rang.

II.

When, too, self-sold to Satan, void of grace,
Old wrinkled hags, with grey dishevelled hair,
Sailed on the sea, in sieves, from place to place,
Or rode on broomsticks through the upper air,
Whooping and grinning in each other's face,
And making all the planets at them stare,
As on they flew, a grim and eldritch host,
To meet their northern friends on Lapland's coast.

III.

There, at the dead of night, on some bleak wold,
Or stormy cape of ocean beetling high,
Their dark, unhallowed orgies they would hold ;
While flashed the merry-dancers through the sky,
Waving their flags, now tinged with paly gold,
Now deeply glowing with a sanguine dye,
And fiercely hissing, like a frantic throng
Of fiery serpents, as they shot along.

IV.

And, sometimes mounting on their horses fleet,
Straight to the Black Sea would the beldams ride,
With fresh recruits for Satan's service meet,
Gathered from all the country far and wide ;
There, seizing his new converts by the feet,
He'd dip them naked in the Colchian tide.
And on them set his stamp of hell, whereby
They heaven renounced and every Christian tie.

V.

But all these wicked hags and warlocks queer,
And wily elves that used to sport at night,
And keep poor country folks in constant fear,
By steam and railroads have been put to flight ;
Nay, now no more the Mermaid doth appear,
Singing beside the shore, in broad day light,
Whose siren powers my muse would fain rehearse,
And point a moral to mankind in verse.

VI.

Frank Oswald,—so our ancient legend says,—
Was a tall youth of handsome shape and mien,
Straight as a poplar which in spring displays
Its graceful form amid the forest green ;
And thus by nature he was formed to raise
The softer flame in lasses' breasts, I ween,
Who with each other vied in amorous wiles,
And on him lavished all their sweetest smiles.

VII.

But Frank impassive to their smiles remained,
With stony heart, like anchorite of old,—
One master passion in his bosom reigned,
The soul-enslaving, sordid lust of gold ;
For this each faculty he hourly strained,
And toiled like earth-worm grubbing in the mould ;
To hoard up money was his chief delight,
His constant thought by day, his dream by night.

VIII.

This passion, in a youth of twenty-four,
When in the bosom love delights to dwell,
And female beauty, that consummate flower,
Throws o'er the heart its fascinating spell,
When e'en old age confesses the sweet power,
Though to its raptures it hath bid farewell,
Seemed passing strange, and every one with truth,
Deemed him a heartless and unfeeling youth.

IX.

It chanced one night, as he in slumber lay,
The moonbeam shining through the lattice clear,
He dreamed a maiden, clad in bright array,
Stood by his couch and whispered in his ear,
That to the sea-shore if he bent his way,
When first the sun did in the sky appear,
He'd see a sight that would enrich his eyes,
And yield him what he wished—a golden prize.

X.

Frank woke enraptured with the happy dream,
Which he believed was sent him from on high ;
And starting, as the sun's first golden beam
Glanced through the portals of the eastern sky,
He donned his clothes and washed him in the stream,
Then to the shore with beating heart did hie,
Where he expected quickly to behold,
Thrown on the beach, a coffer full of gold,

XI.

The winter with his stormy blasts was fled,
Far to the north beyond the Polar Sea,
And o'er the drooping landscape April shed
Her kindly warmth to nourish flower and tree ;
Uprising from the fallow overhead,
Carolled the sky-lark with ecstatic glee ;
While thrush and blackbird, from the planting near,
Filled with their gushing notes the ravished ear.

XII.

And from the furze that now so richly gay
Flaunted in all its golden livery bright,
The happy linnet welcomed, with its lay,
The early wild flowers spreading on the sight ;
Nor less rejoicing in the genial ray,
The lively sparrows chirped with all their might,
And picked up floating down, with which they flew,
On busy wing, to line their nests anew.

XIII.

O'er ocean's tide that laved, with murmuring flow,
The sandy shell-strewn beach, so snowy white,
Clad in his dusky plumage, skimming low,
The cormorant pursued his rapid flight ;
The wild gull laughed, as he on pinion slow,
Winged o'er its surface at a greater height ;
Piped the red shank, and, darting swiftly by,
The curlew uttered his sharp whistling cry.

XIV.

Heedless of nature's mirth on every hand,
And all the look of happiness she wore,
Obedient to the vision's strict command,
Frank, with impatience, hurried to the shore,
But when he reached at length the ocean strand,
No chest of gold he found, which grieved him sore ;
But ere few minutes passed, along the tide
Shoreward he saw a fairy pinnace glide.

XV.

Beauteous it seemed, of rare fantastic mould,
As 'twere the work of a magician's spell,
With silver mast and prow of beaten gold,
On which a figured Triton blew his shell ;
Its silken sheet before the breeze unrolled,
Right gracefully it bounded o'er the swell,
And, as the small adjoining creek it neared,
A youthful female at the helm appeared.

XVI.

Mute wonder held the swain when he espied
Step from the boat a lady passing fair,
More splendidly bedecked than eastern bride,
With golden ornaments and trinkets rare ;
Around her flowed a sea-green mantle wide,
And richly braided was her yellow hair,
With countless glistening gems, of rainbow hues,
Such as a princess might be proud to use.

XVII.

And on her head the beauteous stranger wore
A precious coronet of emerald dye,
Enriched with costly pearls from Neptune's store,
That 'neath the wave in coral grottoes lie ;
And she had on, of purest virgin ore,
Such as earth's womb doth rarely now supply,
Necklace and bracelets—all of sunny gold—
Inlaid with jewels, gorgeous to behold.

XVIII.

With mingled awe and bashfulness Frank blushed,
As he surveyed the lovely lady o'er,
Sparkling with gems, with radiant beauty flushed,
Such as his eye had never seen before ;
And much and fervently to heaven he wished
For one of those rich jewels which she wore,—
One of those precious gems around her neck,
Which would for him an ample fortune make.

XIX.

As thus he lingered by the rocky strand,
 In trembling admiration lost the while ;
 The lady kissed to him her snowy hand,
 Then, with a queenly condescending smile,
 And in a voice mellifluous and bland,
 Whose sweetness might the demon care beguile,
 She thus accosted the young rustic swain,
 Who drank with greedy ears her flattering strain :—

XX.

“ Good morrow, my fair youth, do not, I pray,
 With aught of timid wonder gaze on me,
 I know full well what brings you here to-day,
 To wander thus, so early by the sea,
 Ere yet the lark hath sung his matin lay ;
 Of *wishes*, I can grant you one of *three*,
 Then say which most you covet here below—
 FAME, RANK, or WEALTH, and I shall it bestow.

XXI.

“ Or if you wish a tender partner dear
 (This with a coy and meaning glance she said),
 Endowed with powers of song your heart to cheer,
 And round you still the charm of pleasure spread ;
 Graced, too, with beauty such as need not fear
 Comparison with any mortal maid,
 That gift so precious will to you be given,
 I swear by this green deep and yon blue heaven.”

XXII.

Encouraged by the affable address
 And witching smile of the mysterious fair,
 Frank to the lady did his thanks express,
 For her kind words and offered boon so rare.
 “ I’ve but one wish,” said he, “ and I confess,
 There’s nought on earth besides for which I care,
 That wish is wealth,—then grant me store of gold,
 Which I each day with transport may behold.”

XXIII.

“Then,” said the sprightly lady of the sea,
Whose face a flush of heightened beauty wore,
“If thou, fair youth, wilt go along with me,
And be my wedded mate on yonder shore,
Thy highest wish thou’lt have,—I’ll give to thee
Of virgin gold an unimagined store,
With countless gems of every hue and size,
That will both dazzle and delight thine eyes.

XXIV.

“And, in addition to this splendid hoard
Of gold and precious stones of priceless worth,
I’ll give you all the money found on board
Of all the ships lost in the Pentland Firth,
Or wrecked on sands of Dunnet—in a word,
You’ll be the richest ever was on earth,
With more of treasured wealth than would suffice
To purchase all fair Scotland over thrice.

XXV.

“So step into the pinnace,” added she,
“Which father Neptune for my pleasure gave,
And sail to Dwarwick Head, where you shall see
The varied wonders of my palace-cave ;
There you shall live, in happiness with me,
For ever more beside the green sea wave,
Unvexed with all the turmoil and the strife,
And endless cares that poison human life.”

XXVI.

Frank heard all this with fascinated ear,
And half resolved along with her to go,
And get the precious gold he loved so dear—
The god of his idolatry below ;
But, that a shadowy and foreboding fear,
Spite of the nymph’s fair words and specious show,
Darkened his golden dream, and bade him not
Rashly embark in that unearthly boat.

XXVII.

“Lady,” said Frank, “most gladly, for the sake
Of thy rich dower and kindly proffered hand,
I’d be for life thy loving mate, and make
My residence with thee on yonder strand ;
But some dark fear of ill my mind doth shake,
Albeit thou speak’st with honied accents bland ;
So if you can remove this mystic dread,
I’ll sail with thee at once to Dwarwick Head.”

XXVIII.

On this the wily beauteous siren sung,
With voice angelic, a delicious strain,
Which echo from her cell upcatching flung
In softly mimicked measure back again ;
Frank on the dulcet notes enraptured hung,
Throbbing with joy through every pulse and vein,
Nor could he move one step from her away,
So spell bound was he with that heavenly lay.

XXXI.

The cormorant, the wild dove, and sea-mew,
Attracted by the sounds from rock and cave,
Around the charming songstress tamely flew,
And to their joy by screams expression gave ;
While troops of seals still nearer to her drew,
Their heads upreared above the briny wave,
And fondly listened to the melting song
That sweetly thrilled the rugged beach along.

XXX.

The lark uprisen to greet the early day,
And high o’erhead his warbling ditty sing,
Ceased when he heard the siren’s witching lay,
And downwards hastened on astonished wing ;
The thrush and blackbird, too, as loudly they
Their wild voluptuous notes did round them fling,
Paused in the midst and trembled, overcome
With the rare melody that struck them dumb.

XXXI.

So much was Frank transported with the air,
And tranced in joy, that, without more ado,
He stepped on board, and by the siren fair
He sat him down ; the south wind gently blew
Propitiously to aid the happy pair,
And o'er the swelling surge the pinnace flew,
Right for the cave, which ope'd its portals wide,
Through which Frank entered with his beauteous bride.

XXXII.

The sprightly lady, with a laughing mien,
Welcomed Frank in, who stood bewildered quite,
With the o'erpowering splendour of the scene
That burst with all its magic on his sight ;
Where'er he turned his wondering gaze, I ween,
The whole seemed passing beautiful and bright,
Eclipsing all Arabian tales have told
Of eastern domes and palaces of old.

XXXIII.

Gracing the entrance fair, on either hand
Two lofty columns of white marble rose,
Traced o'er with sculpture exquisitely grand,
On which the eye delighted to repose ;
While wide within, the grotto did expand
To a proud hall a monarch might have chose
To banquet in, when royalty displays
Its whole magnificence on gala days.

XXXIV.

From the high roof that echoed every tone,
Hung globes of starry lustre dazzling bright,
Which day and night continually shone,
And filled the chamber with a gorgeous light ;
Mosaic was the floor, each precious stone
Of varied sparkling hue to charm the sight,
While, all around, the walls were lined with gold,
Richer than mortal eye did e'er behold.

XXXV.

On one side of the magic hall was seen
A couch of orient pearl surpassing fair;
And bright sea-plants—red, yellow, blue, and green—
Ranged round the room in coral vases were;
In pure transparent globes of crystal sheen,
Gold fishes swam and purple mullets rare;
And here were all the beauteous shells that lie
In ocean's womb, of every brilliant dye.

XXXVI.

Some were of spiral form, some scooped like boats,
Some trumpet-shaped, some rounded like a ball;
And here were lying, in abundant lots,
Those pretty shells, so fairy-like and small,
Found by the Pentland Firth, at John O'Groats,
From Neptune's richly stored museum,—all
Resembling coffee-beans, in shape and size,
Of simple white untinged with gaudy dyes.

XXXVII.

And gold and silver beyond reckoning lay,
With countless pearls in many a shining heap,
Gleaned from lost argosies in Dunnet Bay,
And from the bottom of the Atlantic deep,
And from the farthest Ind—where, with proud sway,
The great Mogul barbaric state doth keep—
Was store of diamonds glittering on the eye,
Like lustrous stars that gem the sapphire sky.

XXXVIII.

As he who quaffs the grape's rich juice doth feel
His soul upkindled with a sunny glow,
And through his brain the buoyant spirits reel,
While circulates the blood in brisker flow,
So felt our youth, nor could his joy conceal,—
Intoxicated with the glorious show
Of boundless wealth, unto his eye endeared,
Which everywhere within that cave appeared.

XXXIX.

Meantime the siren seized a conch, and blew
A shrilly blast that echoed round the hall,
When, lo ! a secret inner door up flew,
And in a Triton stepped, of stature small,
Dressed in a spangled suit of azure hue,
Glittering with gems of varied radiance all,
And, though grotesque in figure and in face,
Acted the servitor with ready grace.

XL.

Soon, on a board of mother-of-pearl, he spread
A sumptuous feast, in plate of burnished gold,
Composed of soups which richest odour shed,
And had enticed a sybarite of old ;
And close by these ambrosial cates, were laid
Quaint silver cups, that each a pint did hold,
Full of choice drink that sparkled like champagne,
And with a giddy gladness filled the brain.

XLI.

And luscious fruits from climes beyond the sea,
The nimble-footed dwarf, with dexterous hand,
Heaped on the board, in rich variety,
As with the touch of an enchanter's wand ;
And, that Frank's joys still higher yet might be,
At intervals amid the banquet grand,
The siren's voice, with lofty swelling sound,
Pealed like an organ through the chamber round.

XLII.

Now would she sing some sweetly melting strain,
Of direful shipwreck on a leeward shore,
When storm and tempest vexed the raging main,
And brave hearts sunk amid the billow's roar ;
Then, to relieve the feeling breast of pain,
She'd choose some happier theme from memory's store,
And sing of favouring gales and joys complete,
When sailors with their wives and sweethearts meet.

XLIII.

Anon, she'd chant, with arch malicious glee,
The wicked pranks of wandering trows at night,—
How in a horse's shape, so cunningly,
One would entice some poor belated wight
To mount his back, when off with him he'd flee
Across the wave, that with unnatural light
Beneath his flashing hoofs was seen to glow,
Then with his startled rider plunge below !

XLIV.

And ever shifting panoramas new
Greeted Frank's eye, and then away did glide ;
Here Neptune in his pearly chariot flew,
Drawn by winged steeds, across the halcyon tide ;
There Venus rose, enchanting to the view,
From the sea-foam, in all her beauty's pride ;
And sprightly nymphs voluptuously did lave
Their limbs of ivory in the sparkling wave.

XLV.

Anon, like loving sisters, hand in hand,
With smiling looks and braided tresses gay,
He saw them trip it on the smooth white sand,
That gleamed like silver in the sunny ray ;
And, now, all frolic like a happy band
Of youthful urchins just let loose to play,
With clear, wild, ringing, merry laugh and shout,
Fantastic chase each other round about.

XLVI.

Teeming with every beauteous sight and sound,
Now would some fairy isle arrest the eye,
With lofty cedars, palms, and olives crowned,
Beneath the splendour of a tropic sky ;
There, gorgeous flowers enamelled all the ground,
And birds of dazzling plumage floated by,
Or sang amid the thick umbrageous trees,
That with their spicy odours filled the breeze.

XLVII.

There 'neath a cloudless sky you might behold
A glorious city stretching o'er the plain,
With gilded spires and cupolas of gold,
Pointing to heaven from many a marble fane ;
And by the walls a noble river rolled
Its tributary waters to the main,
On whose magnificent and glittering tide,
Gay crowded barges up and down did glide.

XLVIII.

And through the streets, that spacious were and broad,
Great throngs were passing briskly everywhere,
And chariots drove, and chiefs on chargers rode,
Whose trappings all of gold and silver were ;
And beauteous maids, whose hair with jewels glowed,
Sauntered along in hanging gardens there ;
And white-robed priests, with faces earthward bent,
In long procession to the temples went.

XLIX.

Now would a stately bark come sailing in,
With streamers like the rainbow glittering gay,
Breasting the billows that, with playful din,
Round her dark sides upflung the snowy spray ;
Then would the sun his downward march begin,
And in a blaze of red clouds sink away ;
When in the east the moon, full orb'd, would rise,
Pale as a ghost, and of enormous size ;

L.

And o'er the scene her softened radiance throw,
Brightening each fairy spot on which it fell—
Bower, mead, and stream, that tranquilly did flow,
In mazy windings through the flowery dell—
Till all the landscape, in one silvery glow,
Lay 'neath the mystic beautifying spell,
In dreamy happiness, without a sound
To break the stillness of the silence round.

LI.

A tempest next would burst with fearful might,
Dashing the foamy billows on the shore,
And blue forked lightnings flash through clouds of night,
And thunders bellow with redoubled roar ;
The storm would cease, and, lo ! mid sunshine bright,
Up from the smiling mead the lark would soar,
Warbling aloud, to where the rainbow spanned,
With one broad glorious girdle, sea and land.

LII.

With such enchanting, richly varied views,
By magic called up from earth, sea, and sky,
Beyond the power of the most gifted muse
To paint in graphic colours to the eye,
The siren daily did the youth amuse,
And made the giddy hours fleet swiftly by,
Till, in the whirl of dissipation tossed,
Reflection seemed to be completely lost.

LIII.

And, sometimes, she would launch, with nautic pride,
Her pleasure skiff, and for diversion sail,
With Frank, her constant partner, by her side—
Now to the Baltic shore, with favouring gale,
Now to the isles that crown the Orcadian tide,
The stormy land of many a runic tale ;
But still the bark would home return from far,
Ere yet in heaven was lit the evening star.

LIV.

Thus passed our pair their joyous honeymoon,
With gay amusements and with regal cheer ;
The siren's voice was never out of tune,
But morn and eve thrilled Frank's delighted ear,
Like to a nightingale in month of June,
As wildly gushing, musical and clear ;
While wealth was his beyond e'en Croesus' lot,
Spread all around in that enchanted grot.

LV.

But here, alas ! my muse must change her strain,
So fraught with scenes of wonder and delight,
And sing what dire mishap befel our swain,
Pent in that magic grotto day and night.
Ah, me ! how bitterly he grieved in vain
That e'er he left his home, unhappy wight—
By that enchantress lured to fling away
Health, freedom, peace, and happiness for aye !

LVI.

As with the whole the youth familiar grew,
He felt, alas ! that all the siren's art,
And gold, and jewels, glittering on his view,
Could nought to him of solid joy impart ;
Nay, while the dart of conscience pierced him through,
He cursed the love of riches from his heart,
Which, in a fatal and unthinking hour,
Had thus entrapped him in a siren's power.

LVII.

Her beauteous voice no longer, strange to say,
Its former witchery o'er him possessed,—
Though sweet as e'er it could not charm away
The deep home sickness from his longing breast ;
The more she sang, the more from day to day
His soul with grief and loathing was oppressed,
And he resolved, in spite of wave and rock
And treble spell, to burst the unhallowed yoke.

LVIII.

But when she read Frank's mind, and saw that he
Would fain desert her and her fairy grot,
She grew enraged, and, laughing scornfully,
Exclaimed, " My love, content thee with thy lot,
Thou art my wedded mate, and henceforth we
Must never part ; thy dearest wish thou'st got,
So, lest you should escape some day or night,
My darling bird, I must prevent your flight."

LIX.

There, with a heavy golden chain she took—
 Forged by the elves, of manufacture rare—
And fettered Frank, who like the aspen shook,
 That trembles when there stirs no breath of air ;
Speechless the while he stood—his ashy look
 Revealed but mingled terror and despair,
For now he found all hope of flight was vain,
And break he could not that infernal chain.

LX. '

West from the cave a fairy creek there lay,
 Fringed with a sandy beach of purest white,
On which the merry elves, in green array,
 Were wont to trip it in the clear moonlight,
(So fishermen of old were heard to say,
 Who oft had seen them revel there at night,)
Unto the shrilly pipe's enlivening strain,
That sweetly sounded o'er the murmuring main.

LXI.

'Mong the grey cliffs that beetling reared their head,
 O'er the glad billow from the Atlantic blue,
The creeping ivy and the woodbine spread,
 And sea-pink blossomed, with its purple hue ;
And upwards from the beach, in grassy glade,
 The lady-fern in thick profusion grew,
And sweet hare-bells and daisies red and white,
Formed of the sward a carpet passing bright.

LXII.

At sunset, on a summer evening fair,
 When all on fire the western billow rolled,
Thither, with Frank, the Mermaid would repair,
 Still firmly fettered in his chain of gold,
That he might breathe awhile the balmy air,
 And all the beauty of the scene behold ;
Then to her cave she'd lead him back again,
And, jeering, bid him hug his golden chain.

LXIII.

Thus did she, with unmitigated gall,
And jealous spite, towards the youth behave,
And only when the evening sweet did fall,
And down the broad sun sank within the wave,
With quivering radiance, like a fiery ball,
Did she allow him e'er to quit the cave,
And that brief glimpse he got of sea and sky
Served but to increase his hopeless misery.

LXIV.

At such times, as he gazed on Castlehill,
Across the bay, where dwelt his parents dear,
With thoughts of home his longing breast would fill,
And down his pale cheek drop the bitter tear ;
But at his sorrow, unrelenting still,
The siren false would only mock and jeer,
Nor would she once permit him out of sight,
But in his chain fast held him day and night.

LXV.

The circling seasons came and fled by,
The Summer, with her charms of songs and flowers ;
Then Autumn, with her meditative eye,
Gleaning her stores amid the jocund hours ;
Then ice-crowned Winter, driving through the sky
His savage northern blasts and sleety showers,
But Frank still lingered in his prison-hold,
A living victim to the love of gold !

St. Mary's Fair;

OR

THE MARYMAS OF DUNNET IN THE OLDEN TIME.

"Jockey's awa to the Fair."—OLD SONG.

I.

Muse of the laughing eye and comic vein,
Who did'st inspire the bard of "Anster Fair,"
To sing its mirthful frolics in a strain
So quaint and humorous beyond compare,
Grant me, an humble suitor in thy train,
From the "Far North," with landscape bleak and bare,
One spark, at least, of that celestial fire,
Which glows so bright in Tennant's classic lyre.

II.

Although, no doubt, at times a little dry,
I ask no draught of Hippocrene from thee,
Whose precious fount, beneath the Grecian sky,
So full of inspiration's said to be ;
Contented quite, my charming nymph, if I
Can get a cup of Mocha or Bohea,
And now and then a glass of generous wine,
Which is a beverage every way divine.

III.

That is to say, when you can get it good,
Which is but seldom in our British isle,
Without adulteration of logwood,
And other mixtures villanous and vile,
Which in the system generate a brood
Of ailments without number—such as bile,
Blue-devils, headache, nausea, indigestion—
All most distressing evils beyond question.

IV.

Nay, so inventive are folk now-a-days,
And godly, too—I do not mean to flatter—
That you can rarely to your lips upraise
A drop of whisky that's not spoilt with water,
Or burning hot with vitriol, which plays
Dence with the stomach—a most serious matter ;
But from our present subject of narration
This—though quite true—is rather a digression.

V.

It is the morning of the Dunnet Fair,—
The kingly sun has risen an hour ago,
In best of spirits, with a gracious air,
No cloud of anger passing o'er his brow ;
His best gold crown is on, as if he were
Resolved this day his brightest face to shew,
And smile upon the gay and busy scene,
That soon will spread along the “ Marymas Green.”

VI.

There's scarce a breath of wind on land or sea,
To ruffle autumn's robe of varied dye ;
The chimney smoke upcurling light and free,
In silvery column mounts towards the sky ;
While like a living thing, with voice of glee,
The crystal mountain brook runs gurgling by,
And, all the wide and sunny landscape round,
Joy seems to mingle with each sight and sound.

VII.

Clapping his glossy pinions, chanticleer,
In answer to his distant brother, crows
A note of bold defiance—loud and clear ;
Then, like a gallant gentleman that knows
His duty is to serve the ladies dear—
Proud of his harem, we may well suppose—
He scrapes the dunghill furiously and fast,
And, chuckling, calls his wives to their repast.

VIII.

Clustered along the cottage roof and eaves,
Their loudly twittering song the starlings raise ;
And, from the elder's close embowering leaves,
The robin and the linnet tune their lays ;
Gabble the geese, and make for—greedy thieves !—
The corn fast ripening in the solar rays ;
While, hissing with stretched neck, the valiant gander
Attacketh man and beast that near him wander.

IX.

Amid the dewy, flower-enamelled mead,
Whose odorous breath might charm disease away,
Around its dam, that quietly bends to feed,
The lively foal is seen to frisk and play ;
Such happiness does kindly nature breed,
Where'er is felt her mild parental sway,
E'en in dumb beasts, before their spirit's broke
By man's hard usage and oppressive yoke.

X.

The wild bee, too, is out an early rover,
With her soft fairy trumpet's murmuring sound,
Extracting honey from the fragrant clover ;
And the sweet flowers that still are blooming found,
A sign—'tis strange what instinct doth discover—
No rain to-day will fall upon the ground,
To spoil the lasses' pretty curls and dresses—
A circumstance that greatly would distress us.

XI.

On Dunnet Links our annual fair doth stand,
And strangers from a distance to it hie—
From wild, romantic, heath-clad Sutherland,
Whose lofty mountains swell up to the sky ;
And from the stormy Orcades, whose strand
The billows lash with frantic revelry ;
Thither they flock, like pilgrims to some shrine,
Most in the mercantile or droving line.

XII.

From all directions—north, south, east, and west—

What crowds are making for the market-green,
Decked in their Sunday clothes—their very best—

In carts, on horseback, and on foot, I ween ;
The Sands* are covered o'er, and, without jest,

The road from Canisbay is choked up clean,
With droves of Orkney garrons, staigs, and stots,
And “milkers” of ten pints from John O’Groat’s.

XIII.

And pursy shopkeepers from Thurso come,

With lots of scribes, and barefoot roguish boys,
And canny wives, that qualify with rum

The cup of tea, their first of earthly joys ;
Nor lags behind John Budge, that beats the drum,

And with his drumsticks makes a thundering noise,
When on the Fridays, to the gathering crowd,
He issues forth his notices aloud.

XIV.

And buxom country lasses, here and there,

Trip on, with cheeks as blooming as the rose,
Their glossy locks of black or auburn hair,

Set up with combs, or fastened with bandeaux ;
A few, more stylish than their neighbours, wear

A muslin cap—for, as the reader knows,
Fine Leghorn bonnets, gum-flowers, and so forth,
Were then-a-days unheard of in the north.

XV.

They all have on their best print gowns to-day,

Tied with a flashy ribbon round the waist ;
And from their necks they prettily display

Two ample strings of coloured beads at least ;
White worsted stockings on their feet have they,

And shoes, small-toed and creaking—made to taste—
And thus equipped, with love’s most killing darts,
They’ll make sad havoc ’mong the young lads’ hearts.

* The Sands of Dnnnet—upwards of 2½ miles long.

XVI.

Yonder, *en croupe*, behind her spouse, doth ride
His gaucy helpmate, on a big grey mare,
Their eldest callan trotting by their side,
Full of his new-made jacket and the fair ;
Here walk a buckish bridegroom and his bride,
Linked arm in arm—a very loving pair ;
And there they come who fight our Gallic foes—
The soldiers, with plumed bonnet, kilt, and hose.

XVII.

Among the crowd, so picturesque to view,
A band of ragged tinkers jog along,
With features of the gipsy caste and hue,
As arrant thieves as e'er from gallows swung ;
The wives, with eyes from drunken squabbles blue,
Bear on their backs their youngest urchins slung ;—
Laden with tin, before them steps a cuddly—
The whole well worthy of a Wilkie's study.

XVIII.

Tents beyond tents extend along the ground,
And to the eye present a goodly sight,
Their roofs and sides securely covered round
With good Scotch blankets—not exceeding white ;
In all of these the best home-brewed is found,
And genuine smuggled whisky, gleaming bright,
And heaps of bread and cheese, and cold boiled fish,
That make for hungry folk a welcome dish.

XIX.

Along the bottom of the market-green,
And near the road that leads towards the Sand,
Two goodly rows of merchant's booths are seen,
With showy braws to tempt you on each hand.
Some of the merchants are from Aberdeen,
From Moray some—a shrewd and canny band—
For shopkeepers in Caithness *then*, I trow,
Were not so plentiful as they are *now*.

XX.

This is by far the gayest sight among
The various interesting scenes and shows
Our fair displays ; here crowds of matrons throng,
And scores of pretty lasses with their beaux ;
So that you can't get easily along,
Especially if you have corny toes,
Which may be trod on by some awkward lout,
Whose mother knows quite well that he is out.

XXI.

Beside the merchant "stans," with coaxing air,
Here sit the "sweetie wives" from Thurso town,
With well-stored baskets, selling market-fare—
Namely, nice cakes of ginger-bread so brown,
And sweeties nicer still, you are aware,
And barley-sugar, tempting, I must own,
And "gundy," too, which youngsters love so well—
All these and more our female hucksters sell.

XXII.

Some of them, too, have got for sale you see,
A choice assortment of the nicest toys,
All manufactured quite ingeniously,
For the behoof of little girls and boys ;
Here you have dolls, as fine as dolls can be,—
Rattles and penny-whistles to make noise.—
And coaches, dogs, and horses of rare beauty,
For which our young friends pay no tax nor duty.

XXIII.

And here's a gardener, with a rich display
Of most inviting currants—red and black—
And juicy gooseberries in ripe array,
That make the purchaser his lips to smack ;
And Strasburg onions—worthy of a lay—
Which country wives in buying are not slack ;
And splendid crimson carrots, of a size
That would do credit even to southern skies.

XXIV.

There goes a rustic Highlander, from Tongue—
 A sinewy, long-faced, and ill-favoured wight,
 Equipped with tartan, philibeg, and "rung,"
 Who selleth "rashes," nicely peeled and white;
 These are for cottage lamps, that still are hung
 Along the sooty brace, or wall, at night,
 When lasses ply the wheel, with birring din,
 And lads, on courting bent, "come dropping in."

XXV.

Here Davie Ladles spreads before the sight
 His annual store of bickers, cogs, and caups,
 Made of good Norway timber, strong and tight,
 And fit to bear some little falls and raps;
 Near him old Rottenleather doth invite
 The smirking wenches and the swank young chaps,
 To take a look of his nice brogues and shoes,
 The best and cheapest betwixt this and Lewis.

XXVI.

Exalted on a cart, above the crowd,
 A chapman here is selling off his pack,
 And ever and anon he calls aloud,
 And puffs his wares with all a pedlar's tact;
 Fine shawls, of Paisley manufacture proud,
 And best broad cloth—would grace a Bailie's back;
 All these he offers to the rustic throng,
 And, as the sly rogue tells them, "for a song."

XXVII.

In good Kilmarnock, shading his rough locks,
 Sky-blue short coat and breeches of "black-greys,"
 And scarlet waistcoat of a length that mocks
 The dandy vests of these degenerate days,
 Here stands "Clay John;"* dulse fresh from off the rocks
 In well-heaped creel he plenteously displays,
 And oft he asks each "bonny lad and lass"
 To buy some handfuls of it, as they pass.

* John was a well-known character, who went regularly through the adjoining parishes, disposing of his dulse for meal; and so large was his organ of acquisitiveness, that he paid no regard whatever to the Eighth Command of the Decalogue.

XXVIII.

Behind the tents, along the daisied green,
 That smooth as velvet to the north doth spread,
 Some scores of lads and boys—a novel scene—
 Are very busy breaking ginger-bread ;¹
This cake, with glue as if it baked had been,
 Defies a stroke that would have split your head ;
 While at the first blow *that* is seen to break,
 And so the owner forfeits all his cake.

XXIX.

Yonder's a strolling show ; outside of it,
 Upon a platform raised some little space,
 A mountebank is playing off his wit
 In comic garb, with still more comic face ;
 Below, the crowd stand laughing like to split
 At his long nose, his drollery, and grimace ;
 And, now and then, with limbs grotesque and sturdy,
 He flings and capers to a hurdy-gurdy.

XXX.

The charge is only twopence—in we go
 And see a giantess of marvellous size ;
 But, there's a pony jet black as a crow,
 That doth the rustic crowd still more surprise :
 "Tom," says the master, "what's the hour d'ye know ?"
 When on a watch Tom fixes both his eyes,
 Then gives a dozen stamps, which tell the folk—
 Agape with wonder—that 'tis twelve o'clock.

XXXI.

The showman next bids the sagacious brute
 Minutely all the company survey,
 And single out the man beyond dispute,
 Who kissed his neighbour's wife the other day ;
 Tom slowly goes around, uplifts his foot,
 And silyly touches haveral Hugh Macreay,
 Who, midst a roar of laughter, swears that he
 "Did no such thing—'tis a confounded lee."

XXXII.

But here's a show that *takes* in every place—

Punch and his wife, the comic looking pair ;
At first, the two most lovingly embrace,

But soon dispute—a thing in life not rare :
Punchs fells the shrew—a most atrocious case—

And hanged must be ; but in the noose's snare
He hooks Jack Ketch himself, when up starts Nick,
And lugs Punch with him and his murderous stick.

XXXIII.

The novel sights methinks will ne'er be o'er—

Here's one to vary further still the scene,
A sight our rustics never saw before,

A blind wife playing on the violin ;
Of good Scotch tunes she has some ten or more,

And touches off, right pleasantly, I ween,
With ready bow—a few halfpence to get—
Loch Errochside and Braes of Tullymet.

XXXIV.

A country bumpkin here his luck will try

At “loop the garter,”² with a dexterous rogue ;
He wins two shillings, and triumphantly

He stakes a crown, and *loses* it, poor dog !

But he that bears the lucky bag comes by,

And bawls aloud in an outlandish brogue,

“Here's for you, here's the lottery that entices—
Tickets a penny each, *no blanks*, ALL PRIZES.”

XXXV.

'Tis one o'clock ; and yet, from all sides round,

Cattle and folk are thronging to the Fair ;

'Tis worth one's while to note each sight and sound—

Cows lowing here, and horses neighing there ;

Close by, the rabbits burrowing under ground,

Skip from their holes to snuff the caller air,

And back again they scud along the green,

Wondering what all this crowd and noise can mean.

XXXVI.

The lads to-day their purses do not spare,
 But treat the lasses well, it must be said,
 Filling their pockets—pockets *then* there were—
 With sweeties, peppermints, and ginger-bread ;
 Here is a clown who buys as market-fare,
 To give his sweetheart whom he means to wed,
 A penny-worth of *onions*—to improve
 The fragrant breath of his dear lady-love.

XXXVII.

That's Babylon's* whisky tent from which your hear
 The Highland bagpipe play the Brig of Perth ;
 How the wild music thrills upon the ear,
 Telling us proudly of its mountain birth ;
 'Tis Babylon's self that plays, so true and clear,
 The notes leap out in their delirious mirth,
 Making the very air to ring with gladness,
 And driving from the heart all thoughts of sadness.

XXXVIII.

We'll take a glance now at the Upper Green,
 Where placed for sale the cows and horses stand ;
 Here knots of Caithness "coupers" may be seen
 Bustling among their "bestial," whip in hand ;
 A more acute and knowing set, I ween,
 Is not 'twixt this and Berwick's border strand—
 In suppleness and quirk they all excel,
 As honest *Mansie* to his cost can tell.

XXXIX.

That's Will the drover, in a drab top coat,
 Buying a beast from tricky Tam of Bower ;
 "Three pounds," says Will, "I'll gi'e ye for the stot."
 "Na, na," quoth Tam, "haith ye maun gi'e me *four*—
 A better mouth, I'll pledge my head, there's not
 In a' the market, should ye search it ower."
 "Weel, three pounds ten, and ready cash," says Will ;
 "It's done," says Tam—they're in to drink their gill.

* Not the real name of the piper, but an hereditary patronymic or sobriquet.

XL.

'Tis now the throngest time of all the Fair ;
 The day continues beautiful and sunny,
 And country folks are busy, everywhere,
 Selling and purchasing for ready money ;
 Among the motley crowd are, here and there,
 Some characters original and funny—
 Certes, well worthy of a niche in song,
 Whom I shall point out as we pass along.

XLI.

Arrived from Davis' Straits but t'other day,
 Here comes Bob Slush, with step of naval pride,
 A regular sea dandy in his way,
 Squirting tobacco juice on every side,
 And sporting *in full rig*, as Jack would say,
 Glazed hat, checked shirt, and snow-white trousers wide,
 Blue jacket, earrings, and a long watch chain,
 Down to his knee, of which he seems quite vain.

XLII.

'Twas but last March, that, in the whaling line,
 Slush shipped on board the Harmony of Hull ;
 Yet he has learned to speak the English *fine*,
 And blast his eyes and timbers, like John Bull ;
 In taverns, too, our hero's seen to shine,
 And take of grog a very hearty pull ;
 He thinks himself, 'tis clear, an "able" seaman,
 And much admired, no doubt, by all the women.

XLIII.

How he will talk—his sweetheart sitting by—
 Of his adventures in the Polar Seas ;
 Whales he's harpooned 'neath Greenland's stormy sky,
 Whose tails would split a seventy-four with ease ;
 And he's seen icebergs—he would scorn to lie—
 As large as Stroma, floating 'fore the breeze ;
 White bears, and heathen natives in canoes,
 Who live on blubber, sealchies, and sea-mews.

XLVI.

But here comes Springy, "two sheets in the wind,"

A man of varied talents known to fame,
A doctor and a dominic combined,

Who cures all troubles that afflict our frame—
Rheumatics, coughs, and sores of every kind ;

But, chief as a phlebotomist, his name
Is spread for miles around, o'er field and flood,
Hence old and young flock to him to "let blood."

XLV.

He was a soldier in his younger days,

Though he did not much foreign service see,
And in the army 'twas—so rumour says—

He studied physic and took his degree ;
There, too, our Doctor Horubook learned to raise

His little finger, and enjoy a spree ;
Nine pounds of pension has he in the year—
His school fees don't add much to it, I fear.

XLVI.

He wears a round hat and a light brown coat,

A little man below the common size,
But one among a thousand you would note,

With longish face, large nose, and hawk-like eyes :
A written roup-bill in his hand he's got,

Which through the fair he means to advertise,
A thing he often does—the more's the pity—
Just for a glass or two of *aqua vitæ*.

XLVII.

There's Begg, his brother pensioner—all know him—

As brave a soul as ever fought on foot,
Who in the isle of Java lost a limb,

For which he's got a wooden substitute,
Made of good solid ash, not slight or slim,

And not requiring either shoe or boot ;
In his right hand he carries a stout stick,
And stumps, right fearlessly, through thin and thick.

XLVIII.

Like other pensioners—whether old or young—
 Begg dearly loves a glass of mountain-dew,
 And over it for days with licensed tongue,
 He'll talk of all the scenes that he's gone through,
 (Such scenes before were never seen or sung,)
 Including all the Frenchmen that he slew,
 In bloody fight, nor ever once turned tail,
 While bullets round him flew like showers of hail.

XLIX.

He was a private in the Ross-shire Buffs,
 And might have been a serjeant had he chose !
 And in his red coat, with its yellow cuffs,
 Bonnet and feathers, plaided kilt and hose—
 A cleaner looking soldier, though he snuffs,
 Was not in all the corps, as Forbes* knows ;
 And he'd a leg, ere it received a ball—
 Plague take the French—that charmed the ladies all.

L.

Although he's seen some forty summers now,
 Still in his heart the martial flame burns bright ;
 And well he loves to witness a good row,
 And wield a cudgel in a rustic fight ;
 His good Glengarry bonnet on his brow,
 And back supported by a wall, our wight
 Will deal about him lustily his blows,
 And put to flight a very host of foes.

LI.

Do'st see that old man stepping on before,
 Meagre and lank ? That's Sanders Gullenwell,
 A noted warlock, versed in fairy lore,
 And every sort of necromantic spell ;
 Cattle he cures that elves have wounded sore,
 And, by the aid of second-sight, can tell
 Where property that's stolen may be found,
 Though hid, with greatest care, for miles around.

* Another pensioner, and trusty bottle companion.

LII.

He'll bring you back, too, any hapless wight
 The Fairy folk have spirited away
 To their abodes, where all, though dazzling bright
 And beautiful, is but a false display ;
 Milk, too, that's witch'd and ropy to the sight,
 He can make good as 'twas at first, they say—
 In short, old Sanders has a deal of knowledge,
 Though mostly all acquired in Satan's college.

LIII.

There's Robbie Bighouse begging a bawbee,
 A famous vagrant of the pauper corps,
 Who with his caustic wit and repartee
 Oft keeps the peasant's fireside in a roar—
 Dressed in a long, black, cast-off coat is he,
 Which late a decent Thurso bailie wore—
 As strange a compound of wit, rogue, and fool,
 As ever was produced in nature's school.

LIV.

And here is slicket Sawney with smooth face,
 One of our precious worthies, you must know,
 Who beats the whole at praying in the place,
 Where congregate "the men" their gifts to shew
 See ! how he bends beneath a load of grace,
 A finished Pharisee from top to toe,
 That's just the man well worthy of a sonnet,
 In corduroy knee breeks, short coat,* and bonnet.

LV.

But, hark ! with pipe and drum, and glancing brand,
 Long ribbons streaming from their bonnets gay,
 A party of the Watch†—that gallant band—
 Come beating through the Fair in proud array.
 Close in the rear of this procession grand
 Are troops of urchins happy all to-day ;
 While cows and horses startle at the noise,
 Made by the martial music and the boys.

* "The Men" had not yet begun to wear cloaks.

† 42nd Regiment.

LVI.

The party halt ; and now they form a ring,
Near where yon tent with bunch of heath is seen ;
The pipes bang up, and lo ! with bound and fling,
The merry soldiers foot it on the green ;
King George's health is drunk—the echoes ring—
The crowd around admire the enlivening scene—
And here and there some youngster seems half willing
T' enlist at once, and take King George's shilling.

LVII.

There dance two lads who joined the Watch to-day—
The one a tailor to his occupation,
Who leaves a young wench in the family way,
And recently was summoned to the session ;
The other is a weaver who, they say,
Has to the soldiers gone from pure vexation,
Because his sweetheart, growing rather saucy,
Refused to take him, the hard-hearted lassie.

LVIII.

But, see yon decent matron standing near,
With all a mother's fondness in her breast,
Who seems, poor woman, overwhelmed with fear,
Lest her wild scapegrace of a son should *list* ;
He is her favourite child, it would appear
(Tis strange these scamps their mothers still love best) ;
And much she cautions him with word and glance,
With these “vile red coats” not to drink or dance.

LIX.

A strapping red-haired damsel, Betty Gray,
For modesty not very much renowned,
Is dancing with the military gay,
When all at once, through some unlucky bound,
The fastening of her petticoat gives way,
And down it drops directly on the ground,
On seeing which a roar of laughter loud
Bursts from the roguish soldiers and the crowd.

LX.

But, hush ! the serjeant is to make a speech—

“ Now, my young lads, if any of you here
Desire the rank of officers to reach,

Glory acquire, and live on best of cheer,
Now is your time, by Jove, and I beseech

All of you strongly, as a friend sincere,
Your chain of rustic slavery to break,
And, loyally, King George's shilling take.

LXI.

“ As soldiers you'll have little else to do

But go like gentlemen from day to day,
Clean shaved, in scarlet regimentals new,

Kiss all the pretty girls, and draw your pay ;
Why then should brave, young, able chaps, like you,

In toil and drudgery pass your days away !
So now's the time, embrace the fit occasion”—
Here Sergeant Gunn concluded his oration.

LXII.

But, hark ! there has occurred a desperate row,

A thing that often happens here, I wot ;
The Fair is all one perfect hubbub now,

And old and young are running to the spot.
Two rival lads, called Mucklejohn and Gow,

Have quarrelled 'bout a lassie Peggie Groat—
And, fired with love and drink together, they
Must try the hardness of their skulls to-day.

LXIII.

Friends and acquaintances the parties aid,

And now the affair becomes a general fight,
Some scores of cudgels rattle, blood is shed,

And here and there some poor unlucky wight,
Stretched at his length upon the sward is laid,

High felled to death (a truly piteous sight) ;
While horrid oaths on all sides shock the ear,
And piercing shrieks from females crying near.

LXIV.

There are no officers of the police,
 With handcuffs from their pockets peeping out,
 To seize on these disturbers of the peace,—
 So let them deal their savage blows about ;
 The broken heads and bruises will increase
 The doctor's fees and practice, I've no doubt,
 Nor should I wonder if the rustic fray
 Should put some shillings in the lawyer's way.

LXV.

Brave-hearted, merry England, joy to thee !
 Land of roast beef, plum pudding, and fair play,
 Such vulgar, shameful fights thou ne'er dost see,
 As have been witnessed in our Fair to-day ;
 Thy manly well-fed sons, so frank and free,
 Wield not vile "rungs" in this Hibernian way,
 But with their well-trained fists each other pound,
 Their friends in seemly circle standing round.

LXVI.

Now, everywhere the whisky booths are seen
 Crowded with dealers to the very door,
 Drinking their "feetales"* and discussing keen
 Their beasts' good parts—(such beasts were ne'er before)—
 And lads are here, and lasses whose bright e'en
 And blushing cheeks a painter would adore,
 All getting happy, talkative, and frisky,
 Some quaffing ale, and others quaffing whisky,

LXVII.

Those were the golden days on sea and land,
 When total abstinence was quite unknown,
 When famed John Barleycorn—the wizard grand—
 Sat, like a merry despot, on his throne,
 And high and low owned his imperial wand—
 (His kingly rights disputed yet by none)—
 When even the clergy, loving all as brothers,
 Took now and then a hearty glass like others.

* Treats of liquor after bargains are concluded.

LXVIII.

But eve draws on ; and Phœbus, who all day
 Shone on the fair with countenance so bright,
 Makes at his exit a superb display,
 And from his golden chariot smiles good night :
 Touched with the lustre of his parting ray,
 The fields are glowing with a yellow light ;
 And, list ! the lark, mistaking it for spring,
 Warbles a few brief notes on quivering wing.

LXIX.

Forth comes the glad round moon, and yonder beams
 Eve's beauteous planet, with her radiant eye—
 The youthful lovers' favourite star it seems,
 Of all those twinkling myriads of the sky—
 Soft thoughts inspiring, and romantic dreams ;
 So say the poets every one, though I
 Shrewdly suspect 'tis all imagination,
 And, like Platonic love, without foundation.

LXX.

The roads are thronged, as far as you can see,
 With people trudging homeward from the Fair,
 All primed with drink, jocose, and full of glee,
 As if there was not such a thing as care ;—
 Here one, on legs too supple 'bout the knee,
 Staggers along with very sapient air ;
 And there a madcap gallops at full speed,
 To shew the swiftness of a favourite steed.

LXXI.

But look ! here's Elder George, with *quantum suff*
 Led by his wife who scolds him all the way,
 His nose and upper lip besmeared with snuff,
 His happy visage flushed with usquebaugh—
 A good old boy, who hates to cant or puff,
 But with a crony likes to " wet his clay ;"
 I hope his brother elders of the session
 Will overlook, for once, this small transgression

LXXII.

Ere all these worthies reach their own fireside,
 A few no doubt will ticklish sights behold,
 For in the ghostly moonlight streaming wide
 The fairies will be dancing on the wold,
 And on the smooth sand by the ocean tide ;
 Such revels were quite common then, we're told ;
 But heaven forbend these wily imps to-night
 Should whisk away with them some tipsy wight.

LXXIII.

For should he join them in their sprightly dance,
 And quaff their drink, which witches o'er the main
 Fetched from the cellars of the King of France,
 His doom is fixed—he follows in their train ;
 Nor has the poor deluded fool a chance
 Of e'er returning to his friends again,
 Unless some seer deep versed in lore of hell
 Work his deliverance through a potent spell.

LXXIV.

'Twas on a Marymas eve, so runs the tale,
 That Mansie Gair, as homewards he did go,
 Inspired with plenty of old Clairdon's ale,
 Of which he'd drunk some dozen pints or so,
 Fell in with, 'neath the shadowy moonlight pale,
 (The adventure happened thirty years ago)
 A fairy party habited in green,
 That tripped it to the pipe and tambourine.

LXXV.

"Hillo ! my friends," exclaimed our jolly wight,
 Full of Dutch courage with the barley bree,
 "My faith, but you're a very pleasant sight,
 A merry band as one would wish to see
 Or meet with on a bonny market-night."
 So saying, with a dash of tipsy glee,
 He seized the Queen of Elfland by the hand,
 And danced a jig with her upon the sand.

LXXVI.

They next performed a gallopade, and now
Ere happy Mansie well could look around,
While yet the sweat was dropping from his brow,
And in his ears still rung the bagpipes' sound,
A portal oped beside a neighbouring knowe,
With long bent grass and feathery bracken crowned,
And, in a trice, with that right merry band,
Away was Mansie whisked to Fairyland.

LXXVII.

First through a tunnel he appeared to go
At railway speed, where all was dark as night,
Without a single glimmering lamp to shew
What way the elfin troop pursued their flight,
And Mansie 'gan to think of hell, when, lo !
There burst at once on his astonished sight
A sweet romantic counntry, such as he
Had never dreamed of nor had hoped to see.

LXXVIII.

Here all around was charming to the eye,
Of matchless beauty one resplendent scene ;
Bright shone the sun out from a sapphire sky,
On which no speck of passing cloud was seen ;
While glorious flowers, as thick as they could lie,
Spread o'er the valleys and the meadows green,
And graceful birds of rainbow plumage sung
Mid trees, whence golden fruit inviting hung.

LXXIX.

And by the verdant sides of sylvan brooks,
That murmuring with delight were heard to flow,
Fair bands of sprightly elves with joyous looks
Did trip it on the "light fantastic toe,"
Or play at hide and seek in bosky nooks,
Where thousand fragrant shrubs were seen to grow,
And woodbine-covered grottoes peeped around,
Whence countless echoes multiplied each sound.

LXXX.

But who could paint our hero's great surprise,
His look and laugh so comical withal,
When first he cast about his wondering eyes,
And found himself within a gorgeous hall,
Sparkling with gems of every hue and size,
The spacious floor inlaid with jasper all,
And round the room large mirrors framed in gold,
Where everywhere he did himself behold.

LXXXI.

And in that hall he found a party gay,
With not a few whom he had known in life,
Like lords and ladies clad in fine array ;
Here he saw Johnny Mousie and his wife,
And Davie Dam that lived in Hilliclay,
Boxy from Murkle, and old Willie Fife,
And Geordy Oal, a queer dry joker still,
With his famed sister, both from Castlehill.

LXXXII.

As Mansie entered, all the party rose,
And pressing close around on every hand,
Until they nearly trampled on his toes,
Embraced and welcomed him to Fairyland ;
And while the sweat still trickled from his nose,
With his quick drive and dance upon the sand,
The Queen sat down with Mansie by her side,
On silken sofa, like bridegroom and bride.

LXXXIII.

And giving to his hand a gentle squeeze,
That through his heart sent an electric thrill,
The lady smiled, and said—"Sir, would you please
To taste some liquor from a foreign still,
But lately brought across the moonlight seas?"
"Yes, faith, my dear," cried Mansie, "that I will,
And thank you also for some solid food,
For, lord ! I'm in a devilish hungry mood."

LXXXIV.

Straightway was placed, before our rustic wight,
A host of dishes exquisite and rare,
With luscious wines that sparkled on the sight,
Of virtue to dispel all earthly care,
Which Mansie gobbled up with huge delight,
As he sat on his silken cushioned chair,
Happier than any Caithness laird, or king,
And "Bob the Bowster" 'gan at length to sing.

LXXXV.

Right merrily flew by the lightsome hours ;
Sometimes the queen, with Mansie and her suite,
Would gaily revel in enchanted bowers,
And feast on nectar and ambrosial fruit ;
Sometimes they would make long delightful tours
Throughout the whole of Fairyland on foot,
Or on fleet steeds from Araby of old,
With silver bells, and trappings all of gold.

LXXXVI.

And wheresoe'er in sportive mood they drove,
Or danced in fairy rings by moonlight clear,
Each smiling landscape with the other strove
Which should most lovely to the sight appear ;
While beauteous birds from every leafy grove
Poured forth their blithest notes to charm the ear,
And sweetly scented flowers of vernal bloom
Diffused a most delicious perfume.

LXXXVII.

Thus Mansie led a very pleasant life,
From every sort of slavish labour free,
Nor midst the joys with which the place was rife,
The constant jaunting revelry and glee,
Took he the smallest thought of bairns or wife,
That soon without a crust of bread might be,
So much was he allured on every hand
With all he saw in that bewitching land.

LXXXVIII.

Meantime his helpmate sorely grieved and sighed
 For her lost spouse (her name was Elspet Bain),
 And many a charm to bring him back was tried,
 By knowing seers, for months and weeks in vain,
 Until one evening, in the autumn tide,
 He oped his eyes, and found himself again
 Beside the haunted knoll, where, dressed in green,
 He first had met the beauteous fairy queen.

LXXXIX.

Along the shore he heard the sea-fowl scream ;
 He knew the place, so up at once he got,
 Like one awakened from a splendid dream,
 And bent his way towards his rustic cot,
 Just as the sun dropt in the Atlantic stream,
 And twilight all her mystic shadows brought,
 And from her silver urn 'gan scatter round
 The pearly dew-drops on the emerald ground.

XC.

O'erjoyed poor Elspet met him at the door,
 But when he learned he'd been seven years away
 He marvelled much, for, with the elfin corps,
 The time to him seemed but a night and day.
 But, to our subject we return once more :
 The roads at eve are thronged, as we did say,
 With man and beast ; and, on the Marymas green,
 Save booths and stragglers nothing now is seen.

XCI.

And now, my muse, before we start for home,
 We'll, if you please, just enter " Clairdon's Inn,"
 And see what's doing in that stately dome ;—
 Hark to th' increasing bacchanalian din—
 Gill stoups they clatter here and tankards foam,
 Both old and young are in a *merry pin* ;
 And now and then some bumpkin sings the while,
 Though not exactly *in the Wilson style*.

XCII.

Here, exercising his poetic vein,
 Famed for his ready powers of crambo clink,
 Sits Rhyming Benjie, showering round like rain
 His wit accompanied with nod and wink ;
 Each word you say—so fertile is his brain—
 (No doubt enlivened by the power of drink)
 With fitting rhyme our rustic genius clenches.
 And keeps a-laughing all the lads and wenches.

XCIII.

But *Didlum's come, whose bow so sweet and strong
 Electrifies the heels of great and small ;
 So to the barn—we'll not stay very long—
 That's swept and ready for the rustic ball,
 Thither, in pairs, the lads and lasses throng,
 Leading each other, kind and loving all ;
 And now to Didlum's strains they bound with glee
 A very gay and pleasant sight to see.

XCIV.

Perched on a barrel, close beside the kiln,
 The fiddler scrapes his instrument with pride,
 Getting, with each bawbee, more vigorous still ;
 The merry dancers bound from side to side,
 And shout and clap their hands with right good will,
 (The stream of pleasure's at its highest tide.)
 And now for Caberfcagh they bawl amain,
 And now for Jacky Tar's enlivening strain.

XCV.

Two penny candles, stuck in chips of wood,
 Along the barn their dingy lustre throw ;
 Nathless the dancers thrash, in joyous mood,
 The old clay floor, not over smooth below,
 And ever as the inspiring reels conclude,
 Some lass a hearty smack gets from her joe ;
 For happier they than gentles are, with all
 Their dazzling lustres in some gorgeous hall.

* "Didlum" became a great religious professor afterwards, and looking on his fiddle as a profane instrument, he threw it aside altogether.

XCVI.

Among the dancers comical and rare,
Our friend and military hero, Begg,
Calls for The Soldier's Joy—his favourite air—
And *goes it* bravely with his wooden leg ;
For toes and heels around he doesn't care,
Nor does he mind the lasses' gowns a fig,
As *in the Polka style* he jumps and capers
Beneath the sickly, melancholy tapers.

XCVII.

Flushed with the dance, that scarce a moment slacks,
The lasses' cheeks are deeply crimsoned now,
And seem as if about to melt like wax,
So copiously the sweat bedews each brow ;
More young folk in the music still attracts,
And stronger yet the mingled odours grow
Of whisky, ale, and sweeties, that perfume
From end to end the crowded dancing room.

XCVIII.

But 'tis high time, my muse, that home we go,
Though, doubtless, this is an enticing ball,
But regular hours we must observe, you know,
A thing that sober, decent folk do all :
Besides, a good example we should show
To the whole tribe of rhymers, great and small ;
So let us start, we need no lantern's light
To guide our steps—it is a splendid night.

XCIX.

See ! from the south the happy harvest moon
Shines brightly down with joy-diffusing look,
Fast ripening with her beam the corn that soon
Will fall beneath the rustic reaper's hook ;
To-night her radiance is a precious boon,
Revealing every moss and turn and crook,
To old grey-beards, that homeward bend their way
Muzzy with drink imbibed throughout the day.

C.

A silver-tissued carpet, passing rich,
 Spread for the foot of Lady Luna seems,
 With here and there a patch of blue, through which
 A diamond star with sparkling lustre gleams ;—
 Skimming along the yellow sandy beach,
 The wild curlew a note of gladness screams,
 While Neptune, calmly smiling as he flows,
 Hushes his infant billows to repose.

NOTE 1, STANZA XXVII.—“ —— breaking ginger-bread.”

A cake seemingly TOUGH being purchased, the owner bawled aloud, “Wha’ll strick at the cake?” until some one tendered a halfpenny or penny, according to the half price of the cake, for one blow of a stick, which was frequently prepared for the occasion, by being made sharp on one side, or by having even the blade of an old knife inserted and kept from view. As a match to this FRAUD, the knowing ones often PREPARED the cakes in various ways, especially by sewing them with worsted thread. When this could not be done, they were almost always lubricated with saliva, which was considered a toughening process. If any portion of the cake broke upon being struck, the owner forfeited the cake; but if not, and it could be suspended by the four corners, without falling separate, the owner retained it; and cakes frequently held together after repeated blows. We have seen “the Marymas” become an almost general baffle, from an altercation about “sowed cakes,” or sticks with knife blades; and, we believe, that on one occasion at least, BROKEN HEADS became a subject of judicial investigation.

NOTE 2, ST. XXXIV.—“Loop the garter,” or “prick the loop.”

The manner in which this piece of chicanery was played off was by involving the loops or folds of a long piece of selvedge, of which the owner held both ends, so as to render it difficult for the novice to insert the point of a wooden pin or large bodkin into the middle loop; in most cases the simple experimenter found his point outside the loop, and his stake lost.

Robert the Bruce in the Isle of Rathrin.

THE autumnal sun had shed his parting smile
On distant Rathrin's solitary isle,
And winter, with his fitful trumpet blast,
Summoned the billows of the Atlantic vast,
That, leaping at the sound with answering roar,
Heaved their white breakers round that desert shore.

Forced by impending danger and defeat,
To fly from Scotland for a safe retreat,
In this bleak isle, to anxious grief a prey,
The Bruce a voluntary exile lay ;
And, while no hope within his breast remained
Of Scotland's woful plight, he thus complained :—

“ Alas ! unhappy Scotland, for whose right
In vain for years I've struggled day and night,—
Thy king an exile, and thy spirit broke,
Thou must submit to England's hated yoke !
O ! when on thy distracted state I think,
So nearly standing upon slavery's brink,
Th' involuntary tear bedims mine eye,
And, like a woman, I could almost cry.
Far better, charging on thy blood-stained heath,
I'd died in thy defence a glorious death,
Than that, through seeming cowardice and fear,
I should have sought a wretched refuge here.
O ! for one hour of Wallace now to aid
The cause of freedom with his battle blade ! ”

“ Brother,” said Edward Bruce, “ alack a-day !
Do not to such desponding thoughts give way—
Thoughts all unworthy of a monarch brave,

And which but serve to weaken and enslave.
Courage, my brother, there's a better day
In store for us—'twill shine with brightest ray ;
My native Scotland yet I hope to see
Rouse at thy sight, determined to be free,—
Her sons around thee like a wall of fire,
Boldly defying England's utmost ire."

"Nay, Edward, cherish not so vain a dream,
To me no hope for Scotland seems to beam ;
The latest news breathes nothing but despair :
Our bravest friends are scattered everywhere,
My wife's a captive, pent in dungeon gloom,
Nigel is slain in manhood's early bloom,
My only castle 's levelled with the ground,
And not a home for me in Scotland 's found.
One crime, alas ! and that of deepest dye,
Alone doth on my conscience heavy lie,
When I my sword in reckless passion drew,
And, at the sacred altar, Comyn slew.
Now for this guilty deed, 'tis plain to see,
A righteous God doth justly punish me.
When coming spring revisits this bleak strand,
I'll bend my course towards the Holy Land ;
There, at Jerusalem, unsheath my sword
Against the intruding infidel abhorred,
And strive to obtain forgiveness for that sin
Which like a scorpion tortures me within.
Yes, I'll embark for that far distant shore,
Never to see my hapless country more—
I've done for Scotland what a patriot could."
He said, and sunk into a pensive mood.

Meantime the winter its wild revel kept,
And round the isle with frantic fury swept ;
Gale after gale, with sleet and snow combined,
Bruce to his wretched cabin close confined.
As on his humble couch, one stormy day,
Distressed in mind the Scottish Monarch lay,
He saw a spider strive to fix its thread

On an adjoining rafter overhead.
Six times with fruitless effort whence it hung
Its tiny frame the ingenious insect swung ;
But, at the seventh and last attempt, it reached
The beam from which its web was to be stretched.
The incident aroused the Bruce. Thought he,
“ Here is a striking lesson read to me—
I'll follow the example it hath given,
And trust the issue of my cause to Heaven.
Six times, 'tis strange, I have essayed in vain
To free my country on the battle plain ;
But from this omen, doubtless sent to cheer
My sinking heart and bid me persevere,
One last attempt for Scotland shall I make,
And ‘ do or die’ a martyr for her sake !”

Inspired with hope, the royal Bruce once more
Sailed with his followers for his native shore—
There, nobly persevering for a while,
Fortune at length did on his efforts smile ;
And on the field of Bannockburn his sword
Triumphed, and Scotland's liberty restored.

Queen Mary's Escape from Lochleven Castle.

FOR ten long months, to poignant grief a prey,
In grim Lochleven Castle Mary lay,
Watched like a felon vile from morn to night,
With jealous care and unrelenting spite ;
Still from that dreary prison in the lake
Escape, ere long, she fondly hoped to make.

Once more had summer come to cheer the sight,
With her blue skies and golden sunshine bright,
And beauteous flowers that, spreading thickly round
With loveliest hues cmbroidered all the ground.
Once more the hills looked greener to the eye ;
The joyous lark was singing in the sky ;
The thrush and blackbird, as the season smiled,
In rival bursts poured forth their " woodnotes wild ;"
The linnet sweetly carolled from the brake ;
The wild-duck dived and sported in the lake ;
Along the plain—a happy sight to see—
The young lambs raced about in playful glee ;
All nature gladdened 'neath the genial ray,
Save Mary Stuart who close prisoned lay ;
She, while the big tear glistened in her eye,
Thus with herself held sad soliloquy :

" Beloved France ! where I my childhood passed,
And, as a Queen, was happy to the last,
Would that I ne'er had left thy beauteous land,
With its sweet skies and sunny breezes bland,
Its vine clad hills, and royal gardens fair,
Gorgeous with floral wealth beyond compare,
And princely palaces remembered well,
Where elegance and grandeur ever dwell

Would I had died ere I forsook thy shore,
Then had my earthly sorrows all been o'er ;
For, since the day I touched my native strand—
Assailed by factious strife on every hand,
And bigotry and prejudices strong—
I've suffered nought but calumny and wrong ;
And now in this dark prison hold I lie,
With scarce a glimpse of God's own sun and sky,
Reft of my rightful sceptre and my crown,
Which barbarous men have forced me to lay down ;
And what still deepens my peculiar woe,
My own unnatural brother is my foe !
O, righteous heaven ! what have I done that I
Should suffer all this weight of misery ?
Alas ! my lot is hard—round Scotland's shore,
The meanest wretch that begs from door to door,
Supremely blest and happy is, I ween,
Compared with me, a deeply injured Queen."

While Mary thus half audibly expressed
The painful thoughts that swelled her royal breast,
Young William Douglas, with much cautious care,
On tiptoe hurried to the apartment where
She sat, with pale cheek pillowed on her hand,
While twilight veiled the islet's dusky strand.

"Douglas," said Mary, rising from her seat,
With anxious air and look so sad yet sweet,
"What tidings ? is there hope of rescue near ?
Or must I still drag out existence here,
In lonely wretchedness condemned to die,
Without one loving friend to close mine eye ?"

"Hush, madam," said the youth, "I've come to say
All is prepared, then haste thee hence away ;
The skiff is launched and floating on the tide,
Ready to bear us to the other side,
Where Seyton and his followers, leal and true,
Are anxiously, my liege, awaiting you.
Fear not pursuit, I have contrived to seize
At length, with some ado, the castle keys ;

At supper, in the hall, well dosed with wine,
The governor suspects not our design ;
So, while the hour propitious is and clear,
Pray thee, don't lose another moment here.

While to the beach the Queen stepped on before,
Young Douglas locked the iron grated door ;
And, lastly, their escape more sure to make,
He flung the bunch of keys into the lake.

The boat pushed quickly off—the night was calm ;
A sweet May night, to sorrow, fraught with balm ;
The moon—a few stars twinkling in her wake—
Gilded the bosom of the quiet lake,
And threw her softest light around the scene,
As she would kindly aid the beauteous Queen
In her escape from that grim prison hold,
And jailors there with hearts as hard and cold.

With cautious sweep, young Douglas plied the oar,
And soon the pinnacle reached the southern shore,
Where Seyton and his brave companions lay,
Waiting her landing since the close of day.

Joy lighted up the features of the Queen,
And flushed her cheek that late so pale had been ;
And, while the hand of each she warmly pressed,
A gush of tears her gratitude expressed.

On the gray tower one parting glance she threw,
“ Detested prison,” she exclaimed, “ Adieu !
My foot is on the heath, once more I'm free,
And if just heaven but aid my friends and me,
Before my arms yon traitor host shall bow,
And Scotland's crown shall yet adorn my brow.”
Vain hope, alas ! and fatal, too, as vain,
That crown was ne'er to grace her brow again.

To horse ! arose the cry—the castle bell
Already rang the alarm with startling knell ;
A charger for the Queen stood ready by,
Who to the saddle mounted gracefully,
And with her party in the clear moonlight
To Niddrie Castle urged her rapid flight.

The Piper of Murkle;

A LEGEND OF PUDDINGOE.

I.

In Murkle flourished, six score years ago,
Long ere the fairy folk had ta'en their flight
From Caithness, once so full of them, you know,
A stout, long-winded chap, Jock Ganson hight,
Who was a famous piper to his trade,
And by his trusty chanter earned his bread.

II.

At country weddings, harvest-homes, and fairs,
And every rustic ball, for miles around,
Whither young lads and lasses thronged in pairs,
Our sturdy piper in full "blow" was found;
And with his merry music kept them dancing,
Till Phœbus from his golden porch was glancing.

III.

The fairies oft had heard Jock Ganson play,
And with his music greatly taken were;
Their own good piper had, the other day,
Given up the ghost in spite of all their care;
For, being woman-born, the merry elves
Could not make him immortal* like themselves.

* The superstitious idea was that the green-coated gentry had no piper of their own, but one belonging to the human race, and that when he died they had to procure another.

IV.

Jock's dwelling lay two furlongs from the shore—
To which he oft did of an evening go—
Where, 'mid the rocks that echoed ocean's roar,
There was a famous cave called Puddingoe,
That from the entrance winded far away,
But where it ended none on earth could say.

V.

One day, among some neighbour cronies, he,
In impious bragging mood, a wager laid,
That he would play up Puddingoe, and see
How far it went, withouten fear or dread,
E'en should it lead to that unhallowed cell
Where Satan and his imps of darkness dwell !

VI.

"For," added Jock, "though Nick's a roguish elf,
I canna think he'd harm a hair o' me,
For he is just a piper like myself,
And dearly loves, I'm told, a funny spree—
Nae doubt, then, he would treat me as a brither,
And we would play a merry jig together !"

VII.

Jock quaffed (to brace his courage up) a cog
Of prime home-brewed—for mountain dew was rare—
Then seizing on his pipe, the reckless dog
Hied for the cave, with an intrepid air,
Upon a bright and balmy eve in June,
When flowers were out and birds were all in tune.

VIII.

The scene was one the dullest would admire ;
The cowslip scented breeze was charmed asleep ;
In one broad dazzling globe of living fire
The sun had set in the Atlantic deep,
Whose mighty breast, beneath the halcyon spell,
Heaved with a gentle undulating swell.

IX.

Wall-like superb, in front, rose Dunnet Head,
From which the purple beam 'gan fade away—
Its dark brown cliffs and precipices dread
Now calmly mirrored in the noble bay,
Whose silvery tide, with liquid murmur bland,
Stretched down to meet the long white benty sand.

X.

Along the northern horizontal sky
A vivid flush of gold was upward spread,
Denoting where, though absent from the eye,
The king of day still on his journey sped,
Sublimely seated in his radiant car,
Dispensing light to other climes afar.

XI.

Upspringing from the heathy common near,
The lyric lark—no bard was e'er so blest—
Warbled his evening anthem loud and clear,
Ere down he dropt into his pleasant nest ;
But, to our story—we proceed to show
How bold Jock Ganson fared in Puddingoe.

XII.

With pipe in hand, Jock entered like a man,
Ready to brave all eldritch shapes of sin ;
And, straightway screwing up his drones, began
A lively march that echoed loud within,
Startling the purple-necked wild pigeons blue,
That from their shelvy beds in scores out flew.

XIII.

The goe at first had a repulsive look,
Dark to the eye, and rugged and uneven,
And such as with its chilly air had shook
The nerves of boldest champion under heaven ;
While, from the roof and sides of cold damp stone,
The salt drops trickled ever and anon.

XIV.

With fearless step, Jock urged his perilous way
Along the gloomy cave, that lighter grew
The farther he advanced, till, strange to say,
The lengthened vista, to his wondering view,
Became illumined with a softened light,
Like that of moonshine on a summer night.

XV.

Like icicles which frost, the wizard hoar,
Oft fashions with his wintry breath in sport,
The cavern's roof was thickly covered o'er
With thousand sparry pendants long and short,
That, glistening in the fairy radiance clear,
As white as Parian marble did appear.

XVI.

Jock now was two miles under ground and more,
(The rarest walk, I ween, that's on record,)
When, all at once, he halted at a door
Which gently opened of its own accord,
And straight admitted him (so says the story)
Into a chamber of unearthly glory.

XVII.

The floor with solid silver was inlaid,
The shining walls around seemed burnished gold ;
And, from the gorgeous ceiling overhead,
Small fairy lustres, beauteous to behold,
Like tiny glow-worms, sparkled on the sight,
And threw a magical enchanting light.

XVIII.

Around the rich and splendid chamber, where
A jovial party banqueting were seen,
Of lovely ladies, exquisitely fair,
And spruce young gentlemen arrayed in green,
Quaffing the purple vintage of the grape
In diamond goblets of fantastic shape.

XIX.

The piper, for a moment, stood amazed,
As any man would naturally be,
And, with wide open mouth, intently gazed
Upon the gay and goodly company,
Who, smiling, handed him a cup of wine,
Which Jock loved far too dearly to decline.

XX.

"I am a piper to my trade," cried Jock,
"Am I upon the earth, or where am I ?
I never saw before such beauteous folk,
Or such a chamber with my naked eye,—
Here's a' yir healths," and, saying this, he quaffed
The brimming cup, and smacked his lips, and laughed.

XXI.

The green clad gentry, too, laughed heartily,
And, pointing to the instrument he held,
Politely asked their stranger guest if he,
Who at the pipe so very much excelled,
Would condescend to play their favourite tune—
"The Fairy Dance"—the finest 'neath the moon ?

XXII.

"Most cheerfully," cried Jock, "I'll play't as true
As any piper upon earth below ;"
So up he banged, and up the party flew,
And footed it on the "fantastic toe,"
From side to side in one long country dance,
And with the newest steps direct from France.

XXIII.

Jock blew with all his might, and better blew,
And stamped with both his feet like one inspired,
And through the mazy reel the dancers flew,
And whirled as though they never would be tired,
Till Jock at last cried out, "Lord save's, ohon !
Have mercy on my soul, my breath is gone."

XXIV.

No sooner said than out the lights went all,
Extinguished with a fiery hissing sound—
Vanished the party and the gorgeous hall—
And, when he looked again, himself he found,
(His pipe beside him) wondering much, I trow,
On top of Sibmister's elf-haunted knowe !

XXV.

Jock now had been a whole year and a day
Away from home—his friends had thought him dead—
So when he reached his cot, near Murkle Bay,
They stared and scarce could credit what he said,
So changed he was in feature and in hue,
Although the bag and drones at once they knew.

XXVI.

His beard had an enormous growth attained,
His upper lip had on a fierce moustache,
And deep with dirt his vizege was engrained,
For he had gotten neither shave nor wash
For twice six months : and, with his mouth much bigger
Than 'twas before, he was a comic figure.

XXVII.

Jock, not long after, married a young wife,
A frugal quean, prolific, stout, and able,
Who brought him thirteen bairns to sweeten life,
That grew like olive plants around his table ;
But never after was he seen to enter
Th' enchanted cave in quest of fresh adventure.

The Clairvoyant in India.

For a brief space, 'neath India's burning sky,
The sword was sheathed and hushed the battle cry ;
And, wearied with the sanguinary toil
And frequent march on that devoted soil,
From early home and kindred far away,
In quiet camp the British soldier lay.

Following the standard of a Highland corps,
A youth was there from northern Caithness shore ;
Two years he'd served, and, tho' a stripling light,
Was ever foremost in the thickest fight ;
But, now, when war did for a season cease,
And valour found a breathing time of peace,
A morbid home-sick feeling night and day
Preyed on his mind which nought could charm away.
Music's sweet sounds fell joyless on his ear,
And social mirth and converse failed to cheer ;
In vain did nature lavish all her charms
In mead and bower to woo him to her arms ;
Sweet flowers were here to fascinate the eye,
Of every gorgeous and resplendent dye ;
And birds of dazzling plumage, glorious things,
Flitted about on rainbow-coloured wings ;
Perched on the cedar bough, the nightingale
Sang all the live long night his love-sick tale ;
The orange, date, and almond, rare fruit trees,
With thousand spicy shrubs, perfumed the breeze ;
Here rose, with tufted fan-like foliage crowned,
The graceful palm, in sacred writ renowned ;
And here the banyan, like a forest, spread
Its myriad trunks—beneath whose mighty shade

Of darkling boughs, umbrageous, cool, and sweet,
A host might shelter from the noonday heat.
On all these objects, as he wandered by,
The lone enthusiast turned a listless eye—
Still to one favourite spot when life was new,
O'er the far deep, his longing fancy flew.

It chanced that to the quarter where he lay,
An aged wandering Dervis came one day,
Who from the Indus to the Ganges bore
A wide repute for skill in mystic lore.
He knew, 'twas said, all nature's hidden springs,
Could read the planets, and, 'mong other things,
By pass of hand, and dark eye's vivid glance,
Throw one into a deep mesmeric trance,
And place before him any scene he chose,
E'en though 'twere lying mid Siberia's snows.
To him the home-sick youth revealed his case,
And begged to gaze upon his native place.
"I'll grant you what you ask," replied the seer,
"You'll see your home and all that you hold dear ;"
Then, by a power mysterious and deep,
He threw the youth into a trance-like sleep,
When, strange to say, beneath the evening sky,
His native home arose before his eye ;
Clad in its summer garb, and glowing bright
In the rich golden sunset's loveliest light,
He saw the cottage where himself was born,
The little garden and green fields of corn ;
The brook that wandered from the heathy wild,
In which he oft had "paidled" when a child,
Or from its rushy margin set afloat,
Adown the stream, his tiny paper boat.
Inside he saw—and at the sight the tear
Of joy stood in his eye—his parents dear ;
His mother at the wheel, with serious look,
His father reading a religious book,
And Jane, his sister, in her bloom of charms,
Fondling his infant brother in her arms.

But how his bosom throbbed, when he beheld
One tall fair girl in beauty that excelled,
Whose winning look and smile, devoid of art,
Had first inspired with love his boyish heart :
She, out of doors, her mother by her side,
Beneath a mountain ash, her needle plied,
And, in the beam that seemed to glow and quiver,
She looked, he thought, more beautiful than ever.
Clamoured the rail, the lark sang loud and clear,
The joyous notes seemed ringing in his ear,
As erst they did, when o'er the grassy knowes,
He ran a happy herd-boy with the cows.
Such was the sweet home scene ; at length, when he
Had seen in Caithness all he longed to see,
The deep mysterious trance the Dervis broke,
And with a smile of joy the youth awoke ;
But the sweet vision 'neath his native sky,
Alas ! had faded from our soldier's eye,*
And the shrill bugle sounding close at hand
Told him he still was in the Hindoo land.

* The above instance of clairvoyance is said to have actually happened in India.

Tasso and the Mountain Robber.

He who Jerusalem so sweetly sung,
In his own silvery, soft, melodious tongue—
Tasso, the famous epic bard, 'tis said,
From Rome to Naples once a journey made,
To muse amid the beautiful and grand,
And drink in health on that delightful strand :
For he'd experienced fortune's bitter frown,
And care and sorrow weighed his spirit down.

As on he journeyed 'neath Campania's sky,
A thousand beauties met the poet's eye,
And many a storied scene and ruin gray
Recalled bright visions of the olden day,
When ancient Rome, in arts and arms renowned,
Made every spot he trode on classic ground.
He paused by heroes' and by poets' tombs,
Whose memory, like the laurel, ever blooms ;
And oft he dallied with the passing hour,
Lingering in fondness by some shady bower,
Where fragrant myrtles and rich olive trees
Lavished their grateful odour on the breeze.

Thus did the poet slowly urge his way,
Without adventure, till the second day,
When, lo ! as he a darksome forest neared,
A gang of robbers suddenly appeared,
Led by a chief in picturesque attire,
Of tall commanding form, and eye of fire,
Who, from his belt a loaded pistol took,
And, hailing Tasso, with determined look,
Bade him deliver up his purse, or he,
By all the saints, would shoot him instantly

“Chief,” said the astounded bard, “alas! ’tis rare
That poets ever have much gold to spare,
And mine, heaven knows, is small enough indeed,
There is my all, allow me to proceed;
I’m Tasso;”—starting at th’ illustrious name,
The bandit’s look expressed regret and shame,
Then, bending low, he kissed the poet’s hand,
And thus apologised in accents bland:
“Pardon me, noble Tasso, bard divine,
For this rude act—I touch no coin of thine;
I were a villian, void of soul indeed,
Could I be guilty of so base a deed;
I am a lawless robber, it is true,
But then I plunder not such men as you,
Whose glorious works, the product of the mind,
So much enhance th’ enjoyment of mankind;
And yours have been to me, above all gold,
A joy and solace in my mountain hold.
Yes, tho’ allied with wild and reckless men,
Your muse has often cheered the outlaw’s den,
And lifted up with its enchanting rhyme
A heart that’s burdened with a load of crime.
’Tis Marco Sciarra, captain of brigands,
Who, with profound respect, before you stands,
The dreaded mountain robber, but whose breast
Still of one noble feeling is possessed—
He honours genius, and the sons of song
From him, at least, shall never suffer wrong.
And now, farewell, heaven’s guardian arm defend
And bring you safely to your journey’s end.”

Thus having kindly spoke, the wild brigand
Knelt as before, and kissed the poet’s hand;
Then with his band withdrew, on plunder bent,
Leaving the bard in deep astonishment.

Caractacus—The British Chief.

A SKETCH.

FIRE^d with ambition still for conquest new,
From vanquished Gaul Rome's conquering eagles flew,
To where, lone girt by the surrounding sea,
Rose Britain, rude, unpolished yet, but free.

Dire was the struggle, on their native coast,
The Britons had with the invading host ;
But long altho' they strove, and bravely, too,
What could untaught barbarian valour do
'Gainst warlike legions, disciplined complete,
Panting for fame, and strangers to defeat ?

When all around, from southern England's strand
To the green Cheviots on the border land,
Had prostrate sunk beneath the hostile shock,
Or stooped ignobly to the Roman yoke,
One noble chief, too proud of soul to yield,
With dauntless courage still maintained the field—
Caractacus, renowned in hist'ry's page,
Who shines the British hero of his age ;
With patriot zeal that scorned to be enslaved,
For nine long years the Roman arms he braved.
No vain ambition urged him to the strife,
He fought for that alone which sweetens life—
The boon of liberty, so highly prized,
Dear to the savage and the civilized.
Routed at last, and to the foe betrayed
By one from whom he'd sought relief and aid,
The British chief was hurried off to Rome,
There to await, in chains, a rebel's doom.

As through the streets in triumph he was led,
The hero's manly countenance betrayed
No abject downcast look, or shade of fear ;
He heaved no sigh, nor shed a single tear,
But, with a calm and proud indifference, viewed
The novel scene and thronging multitude,
That, while they gazed on him, could not withhold
Their deep admiring wonder at the bold
Unconquered spirit that he still displayed,
As death itself could not make him afraid.

Around him rose, in all her regal pride,
The mistress of the world, outstretching wide ;
And, while he saw each lofty swelling dome,
And marble temple of imperial Rome,
That shone in gorgeous beauty on the eye,
Beneath the unclouded sweet Italian sky,
“ Ah !” cried he, “ how could people, such as these,
Who live in splendour, luxury, and ease,
Grudge me, who harmed them not, an humble pile—
The mud-built cottage in my native isle !”

When brought before the Emperor, and arraigned
In full assembled senate, he maintained
The same intrepid bearing, self-possessed,
While thus imperial Claudius he addressed :

“ Before your dread tribunal here I stand,
A fettered captive from my native land,
Guiltless of crime, save that I scorned to be
A Roman bondsman, and I would be free.
Altho' my life is in your hands, I make
No abject, mean submission for its sake ;
I fought against you, and again would fight
Had I the power, for freedom's sacred right,
That first and dearest of all blessings given
To man on earth by an indulgent heaven.
I was no coward on the battle-field,
Nor, till, o'erpowered by numbers, did I yield ;

Had I at once my arms laid basely down,
Where now had been, proud monarch, the renown,
The glory that will long remembered be,
In after times, of having conquered me ?
I say no more—if Claudius wills that I
For freedom die a martyr, let me die.”

Struck with th’ heroic spirit he displayed,
And rare contempt of death, the monarch said—
“ Briton, I freely spare your life, although
You’ve been for years Rome’s most determined foe ;
Your noble fortitude, which I admire,
Has touched my heart—extinguished all mine ire ;
So brave a soul must not a captive be,
Go, cast away those fetters, and be free.”

Margaret Lambrun and Queen Elizabeth.

WHEN beauteous Mary, Scotland's hapless Queen,
Died on the scaffold, (what a tragic scene !)
To satisfy a jealous rival's hate,
Whose vanity was, as her talents, great,
All her domestics wept around her bier,
And sorrowed as they 'd lost a mother dear,
While one of them, within a period brief—
A short month after—died of very grief—
Brave Malcolm Lambrun, who long time had been
A faithful servant to the Scottish Queen.

Margaret, his widow, to distraction driven,
At loss of both, upraised her hands to heaven,
And sternly vowed she would avenge their death
Upon the hated Queen Elizabeth.

Disguised in male attire, and with a pair
Of loaded pistols secreted with care,
Forthwith to London Margaret sped her way,
And to the court repaired without delay,
What time the Queen in royal state did hold
A crowded levee, thronged with young and old.

As through the crowd she pressed with eager glance,
One of the pistols dropped from her by chance ;
Seized by the royal guards, upon the spot,
Straightway before Elizabeth she was brought,
The ablest and the stoutest-hearted Queen
That mighty England ever yet had seen.
It was a gorgeous spectacle and grand—
Around her were the noblest of the land,
Statesmen and peers and warriors of renown,
All met to proffer homage to the crown.

Amid this proud and awe-inspiring scene,
Stood Margaret Lambrun with undaunted mien,
Nor paled her cheek, nor thickly heaved her breath,
Through all that interview of life and death,
Like one resolved in heart to meet her fate,
And brave the ire of that dread potentate
Who, while her royal person slightly shook,
Fixed on the criminal her searching look.

“Disloyal subject,” said the Queen, her brow
Darkening apace, “what have I done that thou
Should’st thus attempt my life, who still have been
True to my people, England’s fearless Queen,
And, with the assistance of Almighty God,
Defended her from enemies abroad,
And foes at home more dangerous far than they—
How have I wronged thee—I command thee, say?”

“Madam,” replied the heroine, while a tear
Rose in her noble eye, but not from fear,
“I am, although in male apparel found,
A wretched woman born on Scottish ground—
A woman you have wronged, and deeply too,
When, with a mockery of justice, you
Brought to the block and an untimely bier
My beauteous Queen and royal mistress dear—
Mary of Scotland, whom we all lament,
Whose close was worthy of a martyred saint :
But, madam, by this vile and barbarous deed,
At thought of which my heart afresh doth bleed,
I have sustained, alas ! a double stroke :
Our Queen’s sad death my husband’s kind heart broke.
He died of grief, and from that very hour
I felt within me a resistless power—
A call, methought, of duty to the dead—
To take revenge upon thy guilty head.
From this design I’ve o’er and o’er again
Tried to divert my mind, but all in vain ;
And here I stand that fearful truth to prove,
That, when a woman is impelled by love,

Reason nor force will aught avail to change
Her fixed determination of revenge.
O ! madam, if your royal breast e'er knew
The depth of love, when 'tis sincere and true,
A rash, misguided woman though I be,
Your Majesty must pity even me."

"Then," said the Queen, involuntarily moved,
"You've done what you deemed right for those you loved ;
But, daring woman, what ought I to do
To such a reckless criminal as you ?"

"Is it as Queen or judge your Majesty,"
Asked Margaret, "puts this question now to me ?"
"As Queen."

"Then as a noble Queen you ought
To pardon me although your life I sought."

"But, woman, what assurance can you give,
If I should grant you longer space to live,
You'll not attempt my life some future time,
And perpetrate your diabolic crime ?"

"Madam, a favour with restrictions given
Is no true favour—like the grace of heaven,
The pardon that your Majesty gives me,
Let it be UNCONDITIONAL and FREE."

Struck with this answer, happily expressed,
Which, while it flattered, softened her proud breast,
The Queen a moment mused with thoughtful eye,
Then said, with all the Tudor dignity,
"Begone, and henceforth kindlier think of me,
You have my royal pardon full and free."

Leonidas at Thermopylæ.

A SKETCH.

ELATE with flattery, and averse to peace,
The Persian monarch vowed to conquer Greece,
And, in revenge of Marathon, to lay
That land of freedom prostrate 'neath his sway.
No sooner was the royal will made known
From Susa, where his marble palace shone
With burnished gold, magnificent to view,
That slave and satrap to his standard flew,
In banded millions summoned wide and far,
Equipped and ready for the Grecian war.

Xerxes, with pride, his mighty army viewed,
Of horse and foot a countless multitude,
Whose glittering arms flashed back the solar ray,
And made a gorgeous and superb display ;
Then, from his lofty chariot, thronged around
With mail-clad chiefs, he bade the trumpets sound
The spirit-stirring signal to the host
To march directly for the Grecian coast.

Out flew a thousand banners to the breeze,
Rank after rank, like billows of the seas,
Moved off in order, by their monarch led,
While shook the earth beneath their martial tread.
Proudly through Phrygia marched that warlike host,
On bridge of boats the Hellespont they crossed,
Through Thrace and Macedon pursued their way,
The natives trembling at their dread array,
Nor met they aught of check, by land or sea,
Until they reached the famed Thermopylæ.

With cheek unblanched, and spirit undismayed,
Leonidas the fearful force surveyed,
And with his brave three hundred, sword in hand,
The hope forlorn of their devoted land,
Stood in the Pass, determined to oppose
The onward march of Lacedæmon's foes,
Though well he knew, but scorned the thought of flight,
That fall they must in that unequal fight.

Meantime a chief, on secret mission sent,
With princely escort came from Xerxes' tent,
Bearing large presents for the Spartan king,
The richest and most tempting he could bring ;
Glittering with gems, and gold embroidered vest,
The Satrap thus Leonidas addressed :
" My gracious master, Persia's mighty king,
Whose glory all our eastern poets sing,
Begs you'll accept these precious jewels rare,
And gold and costly silks we hither bear,
Rich silks—the finest for the royal use—
That Persia's celebrated looms produce.
All in return he asks—fear prompts him not—
Is, that you'll quit immediately this spot,
Where, if you recklessly unsheath the brand,
Sure death, alas ! awaits you and your band ;
But, if you aid him—this he bade me say—
With your brave Spartans, in the coming fray,
He'll henceforth be your friend, in war and peace,
And make you sovereign of the whole of Greece."

" Go, tell your king," the indignant chief replied,
With rising anger and offended pride,
" Leonidas, who rules o'er men freeborn,
Rejects his vile insulting gift with scorn ;
Nay, more, to your proud vaunting monarch say,
That he for Persia's wealth would not betray
His native Greece, to live a despot's slave,
And sink at last detested in the grave.
No, by the immortal gods ! while we have breath,
He shall not pass—we'll die a glorious death ;

Should he attempt Thermopylæ, let him know
'Twill be o'er freemen's bodies he must go ;
Hence, with your gems and silks, which we despise,
Your gold's but dross in men of Sparta's eyes."

When Xerxes' royal messenger returned,
And told the monarch that his gifts were spurned,
With boundless rage he drew his gleaming sword,
And, stamping with impatience, gave the word
To force the guarded Pass, and, at one blow,
To crush with numbers the o'erweening foe.

For three successive days the Spartan band
Resisted Xerxes' millions hand to hand,
And gallantly, at each renewed attack,
With dreadful slaughter drove the invaders back,
Until the narrow Pass was thickly spread,
Nay, choked up, with the dying and the dead.

At length, as sank the third day's evening ray,
A native traitor, by a secret way,
Across the adjoining rocks, with noiseless tread,
A large detachment of the Persians led ;
And thus attacked, at once in front and rear,
With murderous javelin, battle-axe, and spear,
'Mid clash of arms, their only funeral knell,
Leonidas and his three hundred fell,
Making Thermopylæ a sacred spot,
A shrine of freedom ne'er to be forgot.

Ariadne.

A S K E T C H.

DOOMED to become a horrid monster's prey,
Within the Cretan labyrinth Theseus lay.
In vain he paced its wildering mazes round,
From side to side inextricably wound :
The more he wandered its recesses through,
The more perplexed the hidden windings grew ;
So giving up all hope—he could no more—
He prayed the gods death's final pang were o'er.

But Ariadne, daughter of the king,
In beauty blooming, like a flower in spring,
Had seen the imprisoned chief, and from that hour
Felt love and pity, with resistless power,
Pervade her tender breast ; and straightway she
Resolved to set the destined victim free.
So, when all hope within his breast was dead,
She sent him secretly a clue of thread,
Guided by which he quickly found his way
Through the dark labyrinth, at the close of day ;
While she herself, with mingled hope and fear,
Stood like a guardian angel watching near.

Theseus beheld the blooming princess sweet,
Waiting his egress (how her fond heart beat !)
With seeming boundless gratitude impressed,
He clasped the fair deliverer to his breast,
And pledged to her his hand in Hymen's chain,
When she agreed to cross the billowy main,
And quitting her paternal home of pride,
To dwell with him in Greece his honoured bride.

Meantime the lovers hastily set sail
Direct for Athens ; but the rising gale
Forced the light bark before its strength to bow,
And make for Naxos with unwilling prow ;
And soon they reach that gay voluptuous strand—
Bacchus' own isle, his favourite spot of land,
That, with the blushing grape empurpled o'er,
Laughed to the setting sun from shore to shore,
And like a paradise appeared to be,
Couched in the bosom of the Ægean Sea.

Joy waved her magic wand, and, for a while,
All things around them wore their brightest smile ;
Glowed the rich orchards, and the passing breeze
Bore fragrance from the fig and citron trees ;
On every branch the songsters tuned their throats,
To greet the lovers with their gladdest notes ;
While from the lofty poplar, all night long,
The nightingale poured forth her gushing song
So exquisitely ravishing and clear,
That echo listened with delighted ear.

Thus passed away one happy fortnight brief,
When Ariadne one day missed the chief :
At golden eve he came not, nor at dawn,
But from the isle had secretly withdrawn ;
And, with a heart beyond description base,
In which no generous feeling had a place,
Had left her overwhelmed in deep despair,
Without one friend or kind protector there.

A fount there was of crystal water nigh,
In hottest summer never known to dry,
Bordered with choicest flowers in vernal bloom,
Of every sweet and exquisite perfume,
And shaded by a beech from noon-day heat,
Its guardian Naiads' favourite retreat,
When Pan, oppressed by the meridian ray,
Upon his rustic pipe forbore to play ;

And all the Dryads and the Satyrs rude
Hied to the thickest coverts of the woods.
Thither the princess oft retired to weep,
And heave the bitter sigh at midnight deep,
When softly imaged in the murmuring stream,
Quivered the pale moon's melancholy beam ;
And zephyr, sighing through the leafy boughs,
To fancy seemed to breathe of broken vows.

Thus, by the midnight fount, she sat and wept,
And with the stars her lonely vigil kept.
At times the hope within her breast would rise
That he some morning, to her sweet surprise,
Would suddenly in Naxos reappear,
Bear her away, and dry up every tear ;
Alas ! the fondly cherished hope was vain—
The faithless Theseus never came again.

The Drover.

I.

Will Roughead was a drover of renown,
And lived in Tain, a celebrated place,
Of which the natives, though near Castletown
That classic village—were a curious race,
Distinct *per se*, and not much famed, I own,
For polished manners, comeliness, or grace,
Or for their lingo, which was neither Scotch
Nor English, but a singular hotch-potch.

II.

Will was himself a burly-looking wight,
With fiery whiskers, and thick bushy hair
That curled around his pate, as black as night,
Without the smallest artificial care ;
In shoes he stood full five feet ten in height,
Dutch built, with shoulders rather round than square,
As if on brose he all his life had fed,
And ne'er had slumbered on a feather bed.

III.

At school he never could be taught to read,
In spite of all that Mr Taws could do—
A stiff old boy of Calvinistic creed,
Who pulled his ears and skelped his bottom too ;
But, all in vain, of true Bœotian breed,
More he was flogged the stupider he grew ;
And so, poor soul ! at length, to save his bacon,
He from the school was altogether taken.

IV.

And to the fields a-herding forthwith sent,
 Which did his genius admirably suit,
 And there, beneath the open firmament,
 He grew a hardy youth and swift of foot ;
 Thus ten years beneficially he spent
 In daily close communion with the brute ;
 And, when his kilt and herding days were over,
 He very naturally became a drover.

V.

And as a judge of "bestial" 'mong the cloth,
 There were not many that could outstrip Will,
 Or make, though all unlettered as a Goth,
 A cannier sale or purchase o'er a gill ;
 E'en Jamie Tait and Patie Taylor both,
 In this department frankly owned his skill—
 Two men that, in their day and generation,
 Shone out as stars at top of their profession.

VI.

Once only was he fairly taken in,
 As we shall show the reader by and bye,
 If the coy muse, whose smile we hope to win,
 Look on our labour with propitious eye,
 And help us with her kindly aid to spin
 A decent stave, and rhyme it properly :
 For it is not so easy, as you'd think,
 To stick to sense and make the metre clink.

VII.

Besides, when now all other things below
 Move on by steam so clever night and day,
 The measured rhymes must not a-halting go,
 Like sorry cripples on the Queen's highway ;
 Or go-a-head young critic lads will throw
 Impatiently aside the lagging lay,
 Or maybe damn it and destroy the sale :
 But this is a digression from our tale.

VIII.

Our hero, at the time of which we sing,
Lived as a bachelor with his handmaid Kate,
A cross old dame that growled at every thing,
So he made up his mind to change his state,
As soon as he some ruddy lass could bring,
Whose age 'bove two-and-twenty did not date,
To lend a willing ear to his petition—
To get a young one was his great ambition.

IX.

But girls at this age, blooming fresh and gay,
Prefer young husbands, be they e'er so poor,
And honest Will was forty-eight in May,
Of this most serious drawback I am sure ;
So the young jades, in their provoking way,
Laughed in his face, or fled away like "stour,"
Whene'er he civilly did pop the question,
But, still, thank heaven, it spoiled not his digestion.

X.

Besides, he'd heard the old adage so true,
That faint heart yet did never gain fair lady,
So 'mong the hussies round about he flew,
And, though rejected by some ten already,
He persevered on foot and horseback too,
With every lawful effort, brisk and steady,
To catch one, if he could, in Hymen's fetter,
And if she tochered were so much the better.

XI.

Meantime came on the famous Dunnet fair,
To which Will went in the professional way,
And to a Highlandman, from Latheron, there
He sold a nag—a very handsome gray—
For which in Orkney, picked out with much care,
He fifteen pounds in ready cash did pay—
Fitted for cart or saddle, quite a fancy,
And rising four year old, his name was Mansie.

XII.

The reverend purchaser had on a cloak,
Such as the "Men" are all in now attired—
Those pop'lar leaders of a Highland flock,
Who by the wives are worshipped and admired ;
Our man with grave and serious accent spoke,
And length of face that said he was inspired :
He was a catechist to his profession,
And preached in both tongues with much acceptation.

XIII.

The price being fixed, the catechist and Will
Adjourned, as is the custom of the place,
To pledge their bargain o'er a single gill,
To which the former said a lengthened grace,
That printed would a page of foolscap fill,
And did the simple drover much impress
With reverence for the man's uncommon piety,
Who also seemed a model of sobriety.

XIV.

It was the first time in his life that he
Had witnessed at a fair, in any place,
(And he had drunk with Christians bond and free)
John Barleycorn thus honoured with a grace,
Who though he doth promote much mirth and glee,
And mantles with a happy smile the face,
Doth oft set folk a quarrelling and fighting,
And doing mischief that is past inditing.

XV.

At length the catechist, with serious look,
Which Hogarth's pencil could alone portray,
Drew from his pouch a rusty pocket-book,
His grandsire's once—a saint too in his day ;
From it he twenty pounds in paper took,
The price of Mansie ready down to pay—
The one a genuine five pound, Will was told,
Of the Commercial Bank, as good as gold.

XVI.

The note looked rather pretty to the sight,
And Will who, as we've mentioned, could not read,
Believed at once that it was genuine quite,
Such was his faith in him who bought his steed—
One who so holy seemed and grave as night,
Must be, he thought, a very saint indeed,
An honest man, if such there was on earth,
Although a real Highlandman by birth.

XVII.

Without inquiry then he snugly laid
The note up in his purse among the rest,
Much gratified at heart that he had made
Five sterling pounds of profit by his beast,
Deducting all expense, and what he'd paid
For "Lammas' Sisters" greatly to his taste,
And feeling thus agreeably excited,
He pledged his friend who also felt delighted.

XVIII.

Each to the other handed round his "mill,"
And, as the whisky was exceeding good,
The happy drover called a second gill,
Which both discussed in very gracious mood :
This done, the catechist shook hands with Will,
Mounted and rode away as fast's he could ;
When, lo ! Will found, soon after, he had got
A gauger's *permit* for a five pound note !

XIX.

The drover in a desperate passion flew,
And in his rage the senseless earth did kick,
When he was told, and with much laughter too,
Which galled him more, of the dishonest trick :
"I'll give," cried he, "the long-faced scamp his due,
Though it should send me to the jail of Wick ;
On Friday next, if I am spared, I'll ride
To where the rascal lives, and tan his hide."

XX.

When Friday's sun rose, Will too rose from bed,
Flung on his drawers and shoes, and out he paced
To take a look, his nightcap on his head ;
'Twas fair and dry, the wind was from the west,
So in he hurries, and desired his maid
To get his breakfast ready with all haste,
As he on pressing business had to go
From home to-day—some twenty miles or so.

XXI.

But Kate he found as cross as she could be,
With tongue as sharp and cutting as a gale
In month of March, when it blows bitterly
From John O'Groat's accompanied with hail ;
"O, aye, most pressing business, Will," cried she,
With sneering laugh, "a very likely tale—
You're just to do the day as you've been doing
For some time past, you're on the brink of ruin.

XXII.

"You're conduct, man, is really shocking bad—
I'll speak my mind, although it gives me pain—
The time was when you were a decent lad,
The most correct and orderly in Tain ;
But now, the lasses—would the Mischief had
The enticing limmers all—have turned your brain,
And make you drive about and show your folly,
The very thought indeed is melancholy.

XXIII.

What is't but they that sets you off to-day,
In heat of harvest ? What a burning shame !
If ever mortal man was lead astray,
You're just the man, and have yourself to blame ;
With drink and women, I lament to say,
You've brought disgrace and scandal on your name,
And, as my character's at stake, remember
I stop no longer with you than November."

XXIV.

Says Will, "I do not care a pinch of snuff,
Your going I'll be sorry to prevent,
For that vile tongue of yours is just enough
To try the very patience of a saint ;
But, lest you should provoke me to grow rough,
And in a kicking give my passion vent,
You'll better get, as quickly as you can,
My breakfast for me ; I'm an ill used man."

XXV.

At length a dish of porridge was set down,
That "chief of food" to rustic Scotia dear,
As Burns, her ploughman bard of great renown,
Has sung in strains that captivate the ear ;
Will, who excelled from boyhood at the spoon,
Discussed three platefuls of that wholesome cheer,
For he a weary way must ride to-day,
And when and where he'd dine he could not say.

XXVI.

And now, that he a little smart might look,
Before the gay enticing nymphs of Wick,
More care than wout he with his toilet took,
And shaved his eight day's beard as clean's a leek ;
Then with fresh water, from the running brook,
He washed the suds from off nose, chin, and cheek,
And when his ample face was cleared of dirt,
He donned his best white ruffled linen shirt.

XXVII.

The drover next his nether man encased
In "corduroys," a new and favourite pair,
Finely set off with flashy purple vest,
Which late he sported at the Kirkwall fair ;
His back he with a sky blue short coat graced,
With shining metal buttons now grown rare,
And, lastly, he drew on, without a spot,
The half-boots bright with blacking from the pot.

XXVIII.

His toilet o'er, Will looked into the glass—
"Aye, there's a figure," to himself said he,
"That any lady, far less country lass,
Could not, you'd think, without admiring see ;
And yet, I know not how it comes to pass,
The damsels all look very shy at me—
Their conduct, dash them, is a perfect mystery,
I'm sure there's nothing like it in all history."

XXIX.

Now, full equipped with bonnet and top-coat,
A grey "fearnothing" with a triple neck,
Will from the stable nicely saddled brought
His best brown riding steed whose name was Jack,
And, mounting, set off at a good round trot ;
And, on the whole, both horse and man did make
A most respectable appearance truly,
And with the general stare were honoured duly.

XXX.

The neighbours gazed, and greatly wondered where
Will could be going to that blessed morn,
So dry and sunny, when all others were
Quite busy cutting down the ripened corn ;
They did not know of any tryst or fair,
And he must be the greatest idiot born
To leave his home at this most precious season,
Unless he had a very special reason.

XXXI.

Said they, there's surely something in the wind,
The drover has at last some damsel hooked—
Some sturdy prudent dame to thrift inclined,
Who for his pelf has all his years o'erlooked ;
And he's away on his best horse, you'll find,
To get himself and her directly "booked"—
That's just his errand, by the holy ladle,
See how he sinks and rises in the saddle.

XXXII.

Will did not care one farthing what they thought,
Or how at him with curious eyes they stared,
Mounted on Jack, and in his good dreadnought,
He looked as independent as the laird ;
He'd cash in bank, which many lairds had not,
And he would have a *rið* sometime, if spared—
A young one too, that, sound in lith and limb,
At kirk and market could be seen with him.

XXXIII.

The day was dry and sunny, as we've said,
With a fine breeze from west that gently blew,
Some grayish clouds were skimming overhead,
And cross the fields the frequent shadows flew
In playful chase ; the purple heathbell shed
On the bleak moor its rich autumnal hue,
And here and there, along the boggy ground,
The downy canna thickly nodded round.

XXXIV.

And tho' the earlier flowers that 'neath the ray
Of genial summer beautified the green,
Had from the faded landscape passed away,
With all their sweet tints, as they ne'er had been,
The daisy still, in modest guise arrayed,
Was everywhere on hill and valley seen,
And where the mossy brook ran gurgling near,
The water flag did bordering thick appear.

XXXV.

The lark no longer carolled on the ear,
As in the glorious "leafy month of June,"
But from the heathy upland you might hear
The plaintive plover's melancholy croon,
Or moor-hen's whirring note upstarting near,
Doomed to become the sportsman's victim soon,
Whose loaded fowling-piece with deadly sound
Oft woke the startling echoes slumbering round.

XXXVI.

Now, as the drover rode along, his eye
Was oft attracted by the pleasing sight
Of plump young lasses, in some field hard by,
Plying the sickle 'neath the noonday bright,
Each in her neat short gown dressed tidily,
That looked like driven snow so clean and white,
Bare-headed most, with black or sunny hair,
And blooming cheeks that spoke of country air.

XXXVII.

And here and there, to cheer the reapers on,
Sometimes a piper in quaint garb arrayed,
With bag inflated, screwing up his drone,
Followed behind, and like an Orpheus played
The "Corn rigs" or "hey for Bob and Joan,"
Which raised the spirits so of man and maid,
That sickles flew like lightning through the corn,
Such magic from his stirring notes was borne.

XXXVIII.

Will felt quite flattered and upraised to-day,
With the marked notice paid him all the while,
For as he passed the merry maids would stay
Their reaping hooks and wave on him and smile,
Which much relieved the tedium of the way,
At every other quarter of a mile,
And made him fancy that the limmers dear
Thought him a very handsome cavalier.

XXXIX.

At length the drover reached the town of Wick,
A goodly borough pleasant to the sight,
Although it's smell's enough to make you sick,
In August when the fishing 's at its height,
And barbarous Highlandmen, that Gaelic speak,
Swarm through the town, and kick up rows and fight ;
But now the herring carnival was o'er,
And Wick looked dull in every nook and bore.

XL.

Will lighted at the Wellington Hotel,
And, ordering Jack a half-feed in the stable,
Stepped up to No. 3—I know it well—
Where you can drink as much as you are able ;
Here, 'stead of ringing, as he should, the bell,
He gave a furious knock upon the table,
Which sounded like a distant clap of thunder,
And brought a wench up with a stare of wonder.

XLI.

“Bring me,” cried Will, “some whisky, my braw lass,
A gill imperial of the best, d’ye see.”
The liquor brought, Will pressed her to a glass,
Which she just lipped with maiden modesty ;
Then, with a freedom which all bounds did pass,
He pulled the damsel down upon his knee,
And gave her forcibly a chaste embrace,
When up she jumped and slapped him on the face.

XLII.

“Hang it,” said Willie, seizing her once more,
“This is too bad, now, for a civil kiss,
I never got, in my born days before,
From any woman such a slap as this ;”
The damsel, in his strong grasp struggling sore,
Gave a loud shriek which, you may readily guess,
Brought up the astonished household with a clatter,
Breathless to ascertain what was the matter.

XLIII.

“Good gracions !” screamed the hostess, “Ohonie !
How dare you, sir, thus use my servant woman !”
“Out of my house, ye scoundrel, instantly,”
Roared Boniface, “such conduct’s unbecoming.”
“Hang it,” cried Will, “you’ll better quiet be,
I’ll take such jaw as this, my friend, from no man ;
I merely gave the jade a civil kiss,
What is the damage ? Bonnie rumpus this !”

XLIV.

The drover paid his bill, and out he strode,
Like one that did not fear the face of clay,
Mounted his steed, and through Bridge Street he rode
At a hand gallop, making a display ;
Clattered his horse's hoofs just newly shod,
Along the street that rough and stony lay,
At this particular period of our story,
Ere yet Reform had opened with such glory.

XLV.

Will cleared the street before him all the way,
And made, to right and left, pedestrians run ;
The ladies, with their parasols so gay,
Shading their pretty faces from the sun,
Were forced to flee aside (I blush to say),
The heels of Will's Bucephalus to shun ;
While every shop door had its knot of gazers,
With curious looks, and eyes as sharp as razors.

XLVI.

All wondering who the devil this could be,
That galloped with such fury through their town,
With blue Kilmarnock and drab coat, as he
Would fairly ride man, child, and woman down ;
Some thought him a crack traveller from Dundee,
Others some trashy laird or upstart clown,
Who had himself well primed with aqua vitæ—
That they had no police to seize him 'twas a pity.

XLVII.

Across the bridge like a dragoon Will flew,
And up "the clift" that leadeth to Mount Sharon,
A pretty spot, with a delightful view,
Although of roses it is rather barren ;
Next, with unslackened rein, he galloped through
"Dub Street," still spurring on his noble garron ;
For *then* no toll-gate there barred up the way,
And forced the traveller for his ride to pay,

XLVIII.

Through Hempriggs next he hurried on with speed,
And for the "Heather Inn" he straight did make,
Where he again alighted from his steed,
And did another small refreshment take
Of mountain dew that carried a good bead,
With savoury "curdy butter" and oatcake ;
Then mounting Jack, once more away he trotted,
His horse's tail in drover fashion knotted.

XLIX.

Meantime the clouds that flitted hitherto
Along the sky, in fairy shapes so white,
'Gan thicken round, and wear a sable hue,
Until they fairly veiled the solar light ;
Anon a flash of lightning darted through
The mingling mass that frowned as black as night,
Followed by a loud crashing peal of thunder
That seemed to rend the firmament asunder.

L.

At first the coming shower sent, with a sigh,
A few large drops before it to the ground,
Then all at once, from the o'erloaded sky,
It poured down with a heavy rushing sound ;
The reapers all for shelter swift did fly,
And, spite of his drab coat, Will looked half drowned,
As 'neath the pelt he jogged along the road,
Crest-fallen and dripping like a river god.

LI.

Will found himself in very awkward plight,
He'd not been out in such a storm for years ;
Jack too got terrified, as well he might,
And 'gan to shy, and snort, and cock his ears :
The lightning every moment flashed more bright,
Enough to shake the stoutest heart with fears,
While peal on peal of thunder rolled and rattled,
As if wild fiends in fiercest conflict battled.

LII.

The short-lived storm had nearly spent its ire,
Just as our drover, with a rueful grin,
From head to foot bespattered o'er with mire,
And thoroughly soaked with water to the skin,
Reached his friend's house, that entered by the byre,
When out a damsel came and asked him in ;
The drover thanked her kindly, and of course
Right willingly dismounted from his horse.

LIII.

Will with the lass was taken at first sight,
And felt all over in an amorous glow :
A strapping quean she was, of middle height,
With rosy cheeks, red locks, and skin like snow,
Brown eyes, and waist that ne'er knew corsets tight,
With sturdy legs to correspond below,
Exactly formed to sweeten married life,
The very picture of a drover's wife.

LIV.

So in he went, preceded by the maid,
Who gave the fire immediately a stir—
“ Sit down, O dear ! you must be wet,” she said,
“ Did'st ever hear such awful thunder, sir ?
My very heart is beating yet with dread ;
Father's from home, he is a widower ;
This afternoon, before the storm came on,
He went to Clyth, I'm left here all alone.”

LV.

Thus saying, from an antique cupboard nigh,
A bottle of the *real stuff* she took,
Ten overproof, the finest 'neath the sky,
Brewed in Braemore—that sweet romantic nook—
Where Morven rears his giant form on high ;
The liquor might have pleased a prince or duke.
Of it she filled to Will a brimming cup,
Which he with gusto speedily drank up.

LVI.

The lass was wonderfully kind to Will,
And more particularly so, when he
Frankly observed, "I am a bachelor still,
My housekeeper's a cross old jade, you see,
Whose tongue goes like the clapper of a mill ;
But come, my dear, sit down upon my knee,
For, faith, you're a braw dame, an' that's a fac',
Now, if you please, let's hae a civil smack."

LVII.

The damsel shewed no coyness in the case,
Nor screamed nor struggled, as some maidens do,
But, with a kindly smile and yielding grace,
Gave him full leave to taste her "comely mou,"
And Will once more was turning up her face,
Red as a coal, when, bang, the door up flew,
And in the old boy stepped, surprised to see
His daughter start from off a stranger's knee.

LVIII.

Donald and Will surveyed each other o'er,
Queerly at first ; at length the former said—
"I think, my friend, I've seen your face before."
"O, yes," said Will, "and very well I paid
For sight of yours, it wont deceive me now ;
You'll recollect the roguish trick you played,
When you gave me, within the whisky stan',
A permit for a five pound note, my man.

LIX.

"There 'tis, a downright swindle, sir, you know,
For which you well deserve to feel this stick,
And, by my faith, you'll feel it ere I go,
Unless you pay me down my money quick ;
Nay, you'd have been the best thrashed man below,
For playing me so rascally a trick,
But for your daughter there, whose kind attention
Has charmed me greatly more than I can mention.

LX.

Thereat the host put on his longest face,
Said he, "My friend, to anger don't give way,
That wicked passion of our fallen race,
But for a meek, forbearing spirit pray ;
As sure as I'm myself a man of grace,
I meant to cheat you not, 'tis truth I say,
The paper that you got from me I thought—
Mistakes will happen—was a five pound note.

LXI.

So calm your wrath, which really is absurd,
As well as sinful, as the scriptures show,
And you shall have, believe my honest word,
Full value for the horse before you go ;
But, you must stay all night ; and Bett, my bird,
That spinning-wheel of yours aside you'll throw,
And set about, as quickly as you can,
To get some supper for this decent man."

LXII.

Will's visage brightened with a smile, as he
Beheld at length the jolly buxom maid
Set down a comfortable dish of tea,
With plentiful supply of cheese and bread,
And snow white butter, quite a treat to see,
Fresh from the churn, with lots of eggs new laid,
Flanked with a bottle of that glorious whisky,
Whose very look itself had made you frisky.

LXIII.

Will stepped outside as soon's the meal was o'er,
But first he winked on Bett with dexter eye,
Who understood the hint, and to the door
Soon followed him, when to the stack close by
Well happed with divots for the winter store,
That dismal time when tempests sweep the sky,
They both adjourned in very loving mood,
To have a small chat as the night was good.

LXIV.

It was, in truth, a charming harvest night,
The storm was gone, and all was now serene :
High in the south the kindly moon shone bright,
And walked in matchless glory like a queen,
Changing the gray clouds to a silvery white,
As she passed through them with her glowing mien,
While here and there, far scattered through the sky,
The stars looked down with merry twinkling eye.

LXV.

Nay, in the very duck pool glancing near,
Surcharged with recent rain, beside the kiln,
The moon and stars were also imaged clear,
And smiled and sparkled there with right good will ;
Save distant collie's bark, the listening ear
Caught not a sound, the landscape lay so still :
In short, the hour for courting was propitious,
And kissing by moonlight they say's delicious.

LXVI.

Will was a business-man, and one of those
That on their time a proper value set,
So, priming with a hearty pinch his nose,
He popped the question—all at once—to Bett,
Who, blushing in the moonlight like a rose,
Said she had no desire to marry yet ;
Still, if her father favoured the proposal,
She might consent, she was at his disposal.

LXVII.

On hearing this Will did as you would do,
Or any man that spirit did not lack,
He put his arms round Betty's neck anew,
And sealed the bargain with a hearty smack ;
Then to her sire impatiently he flew,
While she her hair adjusted by the stack,
To ask the damsel in the usual way,
And have th' affair arranged without delay.

LXVIII.

Will drew the old boy quietly aside,
 Says he, "I've ta'en a fancy for your daughter,
 And she's agreed to let the banns be cried
 On Sunday first—it is a settled matter ;
 For some time past I have been sorely tried
 By an old jade that keeps me in hot water,
 Therefore I hope you'll not gainsay my fancy,
 But grant the lass at once ; remember Mansie !"

LXIX.

The host at first—much puzzled seemed to be,
 How to reply, and gave his head a shake ;
 "My friend, you're in too great a haste," said he,
 "This is a matter that some time should take,
 My child has been a comfort unto me,
 And a most duteous helpmate she will make,
 To one who'll duly cherish and caress her ;
 My wish was she should marry a PROFESSOR.

LXX.

But as you seem a decent moral man,
 And may get grace yet, as you have got pelf,
 I'll offer no objections—there's my han'—
 If Bett is quite agreeable herself ;
 But you must waive the five pounds, if you can,
 I owe for Mansie, that vile stubborn elf ;
 I'm sure the paltry sum of five pounds, no man
 Would grudge to sacrifice for such a woman."

LXXI.

"Shake hands on't then," says Will, "your daughter's mine,
 So let the business now be managed quickly,
 I've made worse bargains in the droving line ;
 I once paid twelve pounds for a cow in Slickly ;
 But that was in the days of auld lang syne,
 Such golden days we'll ne'er again see likely,
 When Bony, with his sodger work so nice,
 Made corn and cattle give a thundering price.

LXXII.

Now Bett was sent for, and with maiden grace
Set down the whisky bottle on the board,
The contract was drawn out, and in short space
All things were fixed as firmly as the Ord,
Will kissed his bride before her father's face,
And got as fou and happy as a lord ;
The banns were three times published upon Sunday,
And Will and Bett were duly spliced on Monday.

LXXIII.

And home both rode on Jack, who pranced with glee.
The fair bride sitting gracefully behind,
Her arms around Will's waist so lovingly ;
The day was calm, without a breath of wind,
From any speck of cloud the sky was free,
With golden sunshine of the sweetest kind ;
Thick danced the midges in the sunny ray,
And small birds twittered from each leafy spray.

The Widow of Rona.

'Tis midnight, and the wild December blast
Hath roused the billows of the Atlantic vast,
That lash with fury—while they lash in vain—
Yon isles that crown the Hebridean main.

Caught in the gale, amid the billowy strife,
A lonely bark is struggling sore for life,
Like one who in a fever groans in pain,
And wildly tosses with disordered brain.
The moon is hid beneath a pall of night,
Dark as the grave, without a gleam of light ;
And fiercer still the savage tempest blows,
For the poor seaman there is no repose ;
Death calls for victims, and no port is nigh,
Where from surrounding peril he may fly.
Oh ! that the moon would pierce night's dusky brow,
And kindly shine to guide his dubious prow.
Through the thick darkness and the blinding spray
The eye perceives at length a welcome ray,
A blessed light that with propitious smile
Beams from the steepy height of Rona's isle ;
And flashing out, like hope amid despair,
Invites the wanderer to take shelter there.

'Tis a poor widow, aged and unknown,
Save to the wind-tossed mariner alone,
Who from her lattice hangs that beacon light,
Which burns so brightly there the live-long night ;
For till the day breaks, and the sea-bird stirs,
She ne'er lets out that watchful light of hers.

There is on Rona's bleak deserted strand
A haven of safety formed by nature's hand ;
And thither, guided by the friendly light,

The storm-caught vessel often runs at night,
And in its sheltering port a refuge finds
From raging billows and resistless winds ;
And 'tis the widow's joy, at times like these,
To cheer the drooping pilgrim of the seas ;
For him, bedrenched and shivering from the surf,
She kindles up her brightest fire of turf,
And sets before him, on her humble board,
Such fare as her poor cottage can afford.
All this she does from motives purely kind,
And nature's holiest sympathy of mind ;
Nor will she aught of recompense receive—
Such bliss is hers to comfort and relieve.

One stormy eve, when making for the shore,
In their frail skiff, she from the cottage door
Beheld, alas ! the husband of her pride—
With her three brothers—perish in the tide.
And, ever since that mournful evening's close,
Her heart has deeply sympathised with those
Who buffet with the billows in their wrath,
And all the perils of that trackless path.

When summer beams around the lonely isle,
And ocean's face is mantled with a smile,
Oft leaning on her staff, at noon of day,
She to the rugged beach will bend her way,
And sitting on a rock, in saddest thought,
Intently gaze for hours upon the spot
Where she beheld, amid the breakers' roar,
Her spouse and brothers sink to rise no more !

She, by her lamp alone, has saved at night
Unnumbered lives from shipwreck's dismal plight,
And yet the public gratitude has ne'er
Bestowed the slightest bounty upon her.*
It matters not—within her aged breast
Her own reward of happiness doth rest ;
And when her spirit wings its flight to heaven,
To her a crown of glory shall be given.

* The above lines were written before the public attention had been called to this remarkable case of disinterested benevolence.

The Maiden of Norway.

Alexander III. of Scotland having died in 1286 without any lineal male descendant, Margaret of Norway, called by historians the Maiden of Norway, became the legitimate successor to the throne. It was proposed to effect a union of the British crowns, by a marriage between her and Edward Prince of Wales, son of Edward I. of England; but the young princess fell sick on her passage to Scotland, and died in Orkney.

THE evening sunshine rests on Drontheim bay,
Where, newly moored, a stately ship doth ride,
And from her lofty mizen-mast display
Her nation's ensign o'er the swelling tide ;
'Tis Scotland's lion with majestic mien,
That proudly rampant on that flag is seen.

To Norway's ancient court that vessel brings
Two gallant belted knights of high repute,
Skilled to preside in cabinets of kings,
Charged with a deeply interesting suit—
To ask the hand of Erick's daughter fair,
For young Prince Edward, England's royal heir.

Gifted with virgin beauty's richest dower,
The graceful Norway maiden charmed the eye,
In blooming girlhood, like a lovely flower,
That opes its bosom to the sunny sky—
A sweet flower of too delicate a form
To bear the chilling blast and ruthless storm.

Three weeks at court the Scottish chiefs remained,
With other royal guests—a brilliant throng—
And, as became their rank, were entertained
With due magnificence of feast and song ;
Each day the best that Norway could afford
Was heaped profusely on the monarch's board.

Flowed the red wine, and many a beaker bright
Was drained unto the young affianced pair,
Who in one crown should happily unite
Proud, hardy Scotland, and her sister fair,
Frank-hearted England, long such bitter foes,
Well symbolled by the thistle and the rose.

But time flew by—the parting hour was come
And all was bustle on the vessel's deck ;
Amid the scene, with speechless sorrow dumb,
The Princess wept upon her father's neck,
While neither could pronounce the word farewell—
That word that soundeth like a funeral knell.

The anchor's up—the sails unfurled—and hark !
Cheers from the crew reply to those on land,
And many a prayer is breathed out for that bark,
That she may safely reach the Scottish strand—
Escaped the perils of the treacherous seas,
Now quietly heaving with the summer breeze.

Around the prow the sportive billows leap,
And sparkling rush in silvery foam away ;
Dive the wild fowl, or skim along the deep,
As they enjoyed a special holiday ;
And oft the seal puts up his head to gaze,
And bask with pleasure in the solar rays.

Cheered with the freshening breeze, the pilot sings,
Looks to the bellying canvas and the skies,
While, like a fleet sea bird, with outspread wings,
High o'er the curling surge the vessel flies ;
But Margaret, like a drooping lily pale,
Sighs in her berth, and sickens in the gale.

At length the lonely Orcades appear,
Emerging slowly from the boiling tide,
And straight for Kirkwall doth the vessel steer,
Where Norway's Princess among strangers died,
Struck down in youth, with all her prospects proud,
Her wedding robe, alas ! an early shroud.

The Chamois Hunter.

WHERE the proud Alps magnificently rise
With snow-clad mountains swelling to the skies,
In a deep glen which formed a sheltered nook,
Lulled by the murmurs of a mountain brook,
And screened half round with clustering foliage bright,
A rustic cottage peered upon the sight.

When summer, putting forth her magic powers,
Decked the fair valley with her wealth of flowers,
And filled the leafy branches all day long
With liquid music from the feathered throng,
It seemed a spot which poesy divine
Might well have chosen for her sweetest shrine.

With nature's glories round them and above,
Here dwelt a decent pair in wedded love,
Both peasants bred, inured to daily toil,
And proud of Switzerland—their native soil.
Happy they lived, although their means were small,
A little herd of cattle was their all,
Which the green valley and the mountain side
With choicest verdure everywhere supplied.
The husband tended through the day his charge,
Which o'er the grassy common fed at large ;
While his good helpmate—ne'er disposed to roam,
Minding her household labour—kept at home.
Within the cottage every thing was seen
In fitting order, tidy, neat, and clean ;
And when the husband sought his home at night,
He found it still look cheerful to his sight ;
His frugal board, the fruit of kindly care,
Furnished with simple but substantial fare ;
While on the hearth, as 'twere in joyous mood,

Crackled and blazed the ample log of wood.
But since, by heaven's all-wise decree, 'tis fixed
That none shall drink the cup of joy unmixed,
So 'twill be seen our humble pair were not
Without some heavy trials in their lot.

Three children had they—one an idiot boy
Of eight years old, which greatly damped their joy ;
The second, though with powers of reason blessed,
Ne'er from his birth a sound of speech expressed—
For he was dumb, and in that piteous state
Which doth our kindest sympathies beget ;
The third—an infant toddling on the ground—
Had all his faculties entire and sound.

It chanced their mother, one bright summer day,
Had left them near the cottage out at play,
When from the hills an eagle sailing by
Cast on the youngest child her piercing eye,
And swooping downwards, horrible to say !
In her fierce talons bore the babe away.

Surprise and fear disturbed the mother's breast,
When first her darling little boy she missed.
Where had he strayed ? She searched each spot around,
But nowhere could her infant son be found.
But what perplexed her most, the idiot boy
Laughed, danced, and shouted with outrageous joy,
While the poor child, who, we have said, was dumb,
Seemed with the deepest terror overcome,
Strove to express by signs a bird that flies,
And pointed to the hills with streaming eyes.
The wretched mother, trembling with despair,
Now wildly wrung her hands and tore her hair—
“ Ah, me ! ” she cried, “ some cruel beast of prey,
’Tis past all doubt, has snatched my babe away ;
And, oh ! the maddening thought distracts my brain,
I ne'er shall see my lovely boy again.”

A chamois hunter, with his gun and rod,
Was 'mong the hills that afternoon abroad ;

Behind a rugged cliff with lichens grey,
Watching an eagle for some time he lay,
When he beheld the savage bird draw near,
With a young child that screamed aloud with fear,
Clutched 'neath her wings, and heavily alight
Within her eyry, on the craggy height.
Tho' all unpolished and untaught by art,
The gallant hunter had a feeling heart.
And he was shocked to think this child should be
Snatched from its home in happy infancy,
And on an Alpine cliff become the food
Of a wild eagle's fierce and ravenous brood ;
For the poor peasants too he deeply felt,
Who doubtless in some neighbouring cottage dwelt.
So the tried marksman, resolute and brave,
At once determined—if he could not save
The infant's life—to shoot the bird of prey,
And bear its victim's mangled corse away.

Poising his rifle then with steady aim,
Which heretofore had slaughtered countless game,
“God of the helpless ! guide my hand,” he prayed,
Then fired directly at the eagle's head.

Now, up the crag with beating heart he flew,
When, lo ! he found to his delighted view
The eagle dead ; the child, though wounded sore
By the bird's talons and besmeared with gore,
Alive and free from aught of vital harm,
For round the babe was heaven's protecting arm.

Soon time the parents, with unbounded joy,
Beheld again their lately missing boy.
The mother clasped the favourite to her breast—
His cheek and lips in ecstasy she kissed,
And o'er him as in tears of love she bent,
Pale as the marble she was seen to faint.

All were delighted save the idiot boy,
Who manifested not the smallest joy,

But on the infant gazed with sullen mien,
Like one that's stung with jealousy and spleen ;
He thought his mother loved the little child
More than himself, and oftener on him smiled,
And hence his frantic merriment that day
The ruthless eagle carried him away.

The boy attained to manhood, and became
A herdsman like his sire of honest fame ;
But the brave man who saved his life when young,
To him his heart with grateful feelings clung ;
And when the hunter was grown old and weak,
With tottering step, and wasted frame and cheek,
And could no longer roam the mountains o'er
With his good rifle, as he did of yore,
All that old age required to him he gave,
And smoothed his downward journey to the grave.

On hearing the Highland Bagpipe.

Old Scotia's wild romantic pipe !
Long linked with many a stirring tale,
I love to hear thy martial notes
Come swelling on the gale.

What glorious deeds they bring to mind,
That yet may wake th' heroic lyre—
Deeds that evince a Roman soul,
And "more than Roman fire."

Pipe of a thousand battle fields,
Thou music of the brave and free,
The tameless spirit of the north
Pours thrilling forth in thee.

Thy tones have roused the soldier's breast,
And nerved his arm in days of yore ;
On ancient Egypt's sultry strand,
And India's farthest shore.

On many a tented field of Spain
Thy gathering notes have echoed, too ;
And on the bloodiest field of all,
The fearful Waterloo.

Pipe of the simple peasant—still,
Through Caledonia's proud domains,
Thou cheer'st the rustic cottage hearth
With thy enlivening strains.

And in the far, far distant west,
Where deep and pathless forests lower,
Thou sooth'st the drooping exile's heart
Through many a lonely hour.

Thy sounds, that breathe of early home,
Across the wild untrodden main,
Bring to the wanderer's fancied view
His Highland hills again.

Pipe that inspir'st heroic thoughts,
While freedom guards my country dear,
Still let thy swelling notes arise
To greet the patriot's ear.

To the Sky-Lark.

Songster ! that risest with the dawn,
I love to hear thy raptured voice,
As, mounting upwards on the wing,
Thou bid'st the fields rejoice.

How wildly beautiful thy lay,
That tells of coming buds and flowers—
Of gorgeous summer's bright array,
Of sweet and sunny hours.

All sights and sounds which swell the heart,
With joy that grows almost to pain,
Delightful lyrist of the sky,
Are in thy thrilling strain.

Of happy days—long, long ago—
Each liquid burst remindeth me,
When warm with fancy's earliest glow,
I blithely sung like thee.

Nor dreamt that life had aught of care—
Alas ! those happy days are flown ;
Yet still on nature's charms I dote—
Poet of heaven sing on.

Richard Cœur de Lion.

RICHARD, the "hero of the Crusades," on his way from Palestine to England, was unfortunately thrown into prison. His place of confinement was discovered by his court minstrel, Blondel; and he was finally liberated on a heavy ransom being paid for him by his subjects to Henry VI., Emperor of Germany.

Twice seven long dreary months had passed,
With light and shade, away,
Since Richard of the lion heart
In Austrian prison lay.

None, save his heartless jailers, knew
Where he did captive lie,
And England looked for his return
With sad and wistful eye.

There lived at brave King Richard's court
A minstrel of high fame,
Who woke with rarest touch the harp,
And Blondel was his name.

The King himself was skilled in song,
And felt sweet music's power,
And with his royal harp had oft
Amused the passing hour.

One air there was 'bove all he loved—
A sweet and simple lay—
And much this favourite tune of his
The monarch used to play.

This Blondel knew, and he resolved
To take his harp in hand,
And for his royal master search
Through every foreign land.

Strong was his hope, while he should use
 His utmost art and skill,
 That he should find the hero out,
 If he were living still.

The minstrel played from town to tower,
 And wandered far and near,
 But nothing of the "lion-heart"
 He any where could hear.

At length one eve, in the Tyrol,
 When sunset 'gan to die,
 He to a frowning castle came,
 Embattled, strong, and high.

As was his wont, he there struck up
 The monarch's favourite strain,
 Which Richard in his prison heard,
 And played it o'er again.

The minstrel listened with delight ;
 The notes that thrilled his ear
 He knew were woke by Richard's hand,
 His long lost master dear.

Then straight to England Blondel hied,
 The joyous news to tell,
 That her loved monarch still survived,
 Immured in prison cell.

Like wild fire fast the tidings flew,
 Through London wide, I ween,
 And thousands gladdened at the news,
 As well as Richard's Queen.

A ransom large for him they paid,
 And soon he crossed the main,
 When he was crowned a second time,
 And was "himself again."

On Visiting Dwarwick Head.

Haunt of my youth, romantic Dwarwick Head,
As on thy bold, stupendous form I gaze,
How vividly, tho' chequered years have fled,
Thou wak'st the memory of my school-boy days.

My heart leaps up—I seem once more a boy,
And lightly tread thy well-known rugged strand,
Or climb thy steep and heathy side in joy,
With friends long passed into the silent land.

Change walks around—but thou the same art seen,
As when I knew thee in life's early day ;
Still proudly towering, with unaltered mien,
Above thine own broad, swelling, beauteous bay.

I've gained the lofty summit of thy brow,
And, while my cheek is with the sea-breeze fanned,
I gaze upon the glorious scene that now
Bursts as by stroke of a magician's wand.

The vast Atlantic ocean rolling near,
The distant Highland hills so sweetly blue,
The Pentland Firth, the Orkney Isles, appear
Concent'red all in one delightful view.

The sun of August shines with mellowed beam,
And nought disturbs the breathless calm around,
Save the grey sea-mew's wild discordant scream,
Or far down billow's gently murmuring sound.

O ! 'tis a joy on this proud height to spend
An hour from care, on fancy's pinion borne ;
To feel the inspiring prospect with a friend,
And dream "one dream of life's romantic morn."

Lady Caithness,
AND THE
MESSENGER FROM FLODDEN.

WILLIAM, Earl of Caithness, who, with his followers, fell at Flodden, in 1513, was at the time under forfeiture. The current tradition is that, before the fatal action commenced, the King, on seeing the Earl advance to his assistance, with such a fine body of men, was so gratified that he immediately wrote out a removal of his forfeiture on a drum head, and forthwith dispatched one of the Earl's soldiers with it to Lady Caithness; so that, if anything should befall his Lordship, the family might be secured in their titles and lands. The bearer of this charter, which is said to be still extant, was the only one of the Caithness corps that ever returned.

'Twas a gloomy eve in autumn—
Clouds o'er heaven lay dense and still ;
And the sun no smile shed round him,
As he sank behind the hill.

All without seemed full of sadness—
Not a sound on earth or sky,
Save the wild wave's hollow murmur,
And the sea-fowl's piercing cry.

In her tapestried princely chamber,
Lonely, uttering not a word,
Pensive sat the Lady Caithness,
Brooding o'er her absent Lord.

For of him she'd heard no tidings,
Since the hour he marched away,
With his sprightly band to England,
Trimly clad in green array.

All the flower of Caithness with him,
Pipe and drum and banner bright—
To assist King James of Scotland,
In the anticipated fight.

With dark fears the lady's spirit,
 Day by day, was troubled sore ;
 Something whispered that she never
 Would behold her husband more.

Thrice of late she dreamed she saw him,
 Ghastly bleeding from the fight ;
 And she heard the death-watch beating
 By her bedside yesternight.

As she sat and pondered, leaning
 With her pale cheek on her hand,
 She was told a youth would see her,
 Newly come from England's strand.

From her reverie she started,
 While her frame convulsive shook ;
 Hope and fear, in anxious struggle,
 Deeply blended in her look.

"Bring the stranger hither," said she
 To her trusty seneschal ;
 And, with graceful bow, a soldier
 Slowly stepped into the hall.

But no sooner had he entered,
 Travel-sore, with weary pace,
 Than she read the dismal tidings
 In the expression of his face.

"Speak, brave soldier," said the Lady,
 While her cheek grew ghastly white ;
 "Bring'st thou not into our castle
 Heavy news for me to-night ?

"Oh ! for pity's sake, conceal nought—
 Tell me quickly all you know ;
 By your look I guess too truly
 That my gallant Lord lies low

“Though your tale must rend my bosom,
 I have strength to bear it all ;
 Heaven will not forsake the widow,
 In her lone deserted hall.”

Then the youthful Highland soldier
 Painfully looked up to speak,
 While the tear-drop, like a woman's,
 Trickled down his manly cheek.

“Sad the tale indeed, my Lady—
 Wounds there are can ne'er be healed ;
 King and Nobles all have perished,
 On dark Flodden's bloody field.

“And, alas ! my honoured chieftain
 There, too, lies among the slain,
 With his followers all around him,
 Ne'er to cross the Ord again.

“I alone, the sole survivor
 Of our brave lamented band,
 Bear thee home this precious charter,
 Written with the royal hand.

“It restores thee all thy titles,
 Every privilege and right ;
 'Twas the last deed of the monarch,
 Ere the trumpet blew to fight.”

“Worthless now to me and empty,”
 Said the Lady with a sigh,
 “All the rank the world can give me—
 All the honours 'neath the sky.”

Then withdrawing from the chamber,
 Whelmed in sorrow passing deep,
 To her widowed couch she hurried,
 There in solitude to weep.

Ode to Spring.

Hail to thy gracious advent, hail !
Spirit of light and song how dear !
Again thou visitest the earth,
The drooping heart to cheer.

With joy unfeigned I bid thee hail,
When winter's piercing blasts are o'er,
How like a kindly friend thou com'st,
To gladden us once more.

At thy approach, so full of love,
The flowers are thronging lawn and lea ;
And nature's happy songsters vie
In bursts of praise to thee.

The raging Pentland e'en hath smoothed
His hoary rugged ocean waves,
And rolls with calmer current now
Above his bed of graves.

No songs of birds are swelling there,
Yet at thy glad and glorious sight,
Methinks the wild untamed sea-mew
Screams louder with delight.

The hind is whistling by his team,
Childhood and youth are out at play ;
Nay, old age, tottering to the door,
Basks in thy blessed ray.

O ! what a kind physician thou,
Fraught with thy soft and balmy breeze—
Thou to the poor man bringest health
That's pining with disease.

Hope of the year ! I bid thee hail
Once more, with all thy sunny hours,
Thy countless melodies of love,
Thy thousand blooming flowers.

On Visiting Melrose.

It was a calm, autumnal day,
The sky was cloudless and serene ;
And scarce a fading tinge as yet
On leaf or branch was seen,
To tell that summer's reign had passed,—
So bright and gorgeous to the last.

My spirit overflowed with joy,
And fancy bounded lightly, too,
Amid the scene that on me burst,
So beautiful and new ;
For wheresoe'er I gazed around,
All was enchanting, classic ground.

With many a shady grove o'erhung,
Here flowed the Tweed delighted by,
And there the wizard Eildon rose
Fantastic on the eye,
With triple crest and mien of pride,
O'erlooking all the landscape wide.

And Melrose, with its holy fane,
Sweet as a dream of beauty lay
Before me in the sunshine bright,
As in a garden gay ;
The whole so like a charmed spot,
Thrice hallowed by the muse of Scott.

Shrine of St Mary ! ah ! how sad
Thy ruined cloisters now appear,
The grey owl hooting from thy walls,
In dismal mockery drear,
Whence rose to heaven, in other days,
The pure, melodious song of praise.

O'er countless tombs of thine I pored,
With moss and ivy half o'erspread,
Which chronicle in antique phrase
Thy more illustrious dead ;
For here sleep many a Baron bold,
And saintly Abbot, famed of old.

And here, too, rests the Bruce's heart,
As brave in field to "do or die"
As ever throbbed in human breast,
Or glowed for liberty !
O ! worthy of such heart art thou,
Still glorious pile, tho' crumbling now.

And yet pale ruin o'er thee broods,
With such a mild and patient air,
That fancy never yet did paint
A "scene so sad and fair"—
So deeply touching to the eye,
When seen 'neath autumn's stilly sky.

Camoens.

DEGENERATE Portugal with pride
Points to one bard of deathless name,
Th' illustrious Camoens, who stands
High on the roll of fame.

Inspired by the heroic muse,
He boldly seized the tuneful lyre,
And sung his patriotic theme*
With all a poet's fire.

The notes proclaimed the master's hand ;
And, as he swept the chords along,
"The thoughts that breathe and words that burn"
Came glowing in his song.

And glorious battle-fields of fame,
And steel-clad knights, and heroes bold,
Start living in his magic verse,
As in the days of old.

But when the Spirit of the Cape
He calls up from the Stormy Pole,
Sublimity and terror fill
The agitated soul.

He was a soldier, too, in youth,
And on the tented field and flood
He for his country bravely fought,
And poured for her his blood.

* The Lusiad.

And, doubtless, she for these deserts
Bestowed on him a meet reward—
She largely pensioned him for life,
The hero and the bard.

Ah ! no, that nobly gifted soul,
When worn and frail in life's decline,
She suffered—base degenerate land—
In poverty to pine.

One only faithful friend he had,
A poor old Black with tresses white,
Who for his master daily begged—
A melancholy sight.

He through the streets of Lisbon went,
And, in the virgin's name implored
A pittance for the bard who sang
And drew for her the sword.

But, while the poet's claim he urged,
With plaintive voice and tearful eye,
The grandee and the titled dame
Unheeding passed him by.

Alike regardless both of him
And of his master's piteous case,
The gilded equipage rolled on
In fashion's giddy chase.

Alas for genius !—he who now
Is Portugal's chief boast and pride,
Neglected sank, a prey to want,
And in a POOR-HOUSE died !

The Young Soldier.

IN Reay his widowed mother dwelt,
He was her only hope and joy ;
But to the wars would Allan go
When scarce eighteen—a sprightly boy.

For he had seen, one market-day,
At Thurso in the autumn tide,
A party of the Highland Watch
Beat through the town in martial pride.

The music of the pipe and drum,
The scarlet coat and glancing brand,
Inspired the young enthusiast's breast,
And he enlisted in their band.

The route soon came, and he must leave
His Highland home, so sweet and wild ;
His mother almost frantic grew
At thought of parting with her child.

And long his little sister begged
Her Allan not from her to part ;
And twined her arms around his neck,
And cried as she would break her heart.

But vain was all their deep distress,
And mingled tears, he dared not stay ;
So with a boding sad farewell
He tore himself from them away.

'Twas spring—the gallant Watch embark,
With other troops, for Egypt's coast ;
And soon, near Alexandria's walls,
They put to flight the Gallic host.

The tumult of the strife was hushed ;
Among the dead that strewed the ground
Our youthful Highland soldier lay,
Sore struggling with a mortal wound.

The blood came trickling from his breast,
His fevered tongue was parched and dry ;
But he could get no water there,
And no kind loving face was nigh.

And now, when death was hovering round,
His brief career in arms to close,
The memory of his childhood's home
A moment on his mind arose.

The thought with anguish wrung his soul—
The poor unhappy stripling sighed,
“ My mother and my sister dear.”
Then stretched him on the sand and died.

Lines:

ON SEEING IN EDINBURGH ONE OF THOSE SMALL SHELLS
CALLED JOHN O'GROAT'S BUCKIES.

GEM of the North ! how strongly thou
Recall'st to recollection now,
 That bleak and rugged shore,
Round which the savage sea-fowl cry,
And battling in their fury nigh,
 The Pentland billows roar.

As in our garden walks and bowers,
The daisy, amid brighter flowers,
 Her modest visage rears,
So 'mong these shells from India's strand,
So rare, and beautiful, and grand,
 Thy tiny form appears.

When summer sends its sunny gale,
The nautilus on thee might sail,
 And sweet excursions make ;
And even the lady mermaid fair
With thee might well adorn her hair,
 Or hang thee around her neck.

O ! wild the scene oft met thy glance,
The breakers in their stormy dance—
 The music of the blast,
The toiling bark, and oft at night
The northern streamers flashing bright—
 The dark cloud hurrying past.

Timid and shy, the heron grey,
At times would near thee watch his prey,
 And like a spectre stand ;
While tired of wing, the wild sea mew
Would frequent come and linger too,
 Upon thy shelly strand.

Now thou hast found a proud retreat
At last, in "Scotia's darling seat,"
 And learning's favorite bower,
Where science, the magician grand,
With beauty goeth hand in hand :
 And wide extends their power.

The Wind.

HARK ! 'tis the first autumnal blast,
Reminding us that summer's past,
 With all its bright display,
When earth seemed carpeted with flowers,
And music charmed the fleeting hours,
 Throughout the livelong day.

It comes along the tranquil deep,
Rousing the billows from their sleep ;
 And in its dirge-like flow,
And wildly fitful hollow moan
That makes the trembling forest groan,
 There is a tale of woe.

It speaks of winter's stormy power—
Of many a dark and dismal hour,
 To pilgrims on the main,
Of corsers floating on the deep,
Of hearts that yearn for those and weep
 They ne'er shall meet again.

Nature's wild harp ! in every clime
Thy music, since the first of time,
 Has struck the pensive ear,
Now sighing with a gentle tone—
Now sweeping in the tempest on,
 Through all its chords of fear.

How often with unearthly sound,
Like to a spirit's wailing round,
 Thou com'st at midnight hour,
Filling the soul when all is peace—
With thoughts of life's uncertain lease,
 And heaven's protecting power.

The Broken Heart.

THE spring was smiling from the sky,
And nature's breath came sweet and bland,
When Fanny left her native home,
To seek a foreign strand.

One long and lingering look she cast
On Caithness' dear tho' rugged shore,
Which something whispered to her heart
She never would see more.

In search of health 'neath milder skies,
She crossed the ocean, sad and pale ;
Vain hope ! death's shadow with her went—
Hers was a cureless ail.

Consumption's seal was on her cheek—
That fatal hectic spot was there—
Which, while it wears the hue of health,
Breathes nothing but despair.

With slow desponding step she roamed
Through many a fair scene day by day,
Where France extends her vine clad hills,
And laughing valleys gay.

Through Germany she wandered next—
The seat of fancy's wildest spells—
And gazed upon the storied Rhine,
And matchless Drachenfels.

Now Switzerland—romantic, proud—
'Mid lakes and mountains throned on high,
Rose like a bright and wondrous dream
Upon her pensive eye.

Then Italy before her spread
Her magic charms of every hue—
Her domes and monuments of old,
And skies of sweetest blue.

But, ah ! those bright and beauteous scenes
To her nor joy nor solace gave ;
She seemed as if she saw them not—
Her thoughts were in the grave.

As autumn came with falling leaf,
She, like a sweet flower, withered fast,
Till wasted to a shade was seen
Her fragile form at last.

She wore a locket at her breast,
The gift of one now dead and gone,
Which, next to God's own blessed book,
She loved to look upon.

That little gift so dearly prized,
The lovelorn maiden, dying, pressed
Unto her young and broken heart—
Then calmly sunk to rest.

The Spirit of the Ocean's Song.

THE winds have burst their prison caves,
Where they slumbered many a day ;
And hark ! at their summons my own wild waves
Are again at their wintry play.

They are dancing along the stormy shore
In loud and reckless glee !
And the sound of death is in their roar,
But 'tis music and joy to me.

And aye, as the scowling tempest spreads,
And the winds more fiercely blow,
They are tossing the spray above their heads,
Which drifteth around like snow.

And, O ! how they lash the eternal rocks,
In crowds from the Atlantic far ;
Yet nobly these giants withstand their shocks
Like veterans with many a scar.

But, alas ! for the bark that is tossing now
O'er my billows so wildly driven,
When the night hath come with her pitchy brow,
And there gleams not a star in heaven.

When the ocean is roaring around her loud,
Uptorn by the desperate gale,
And the startling crash of the thunder-cloud
Makes the stoutest heart to quail.

That hapless bark—she cannot outlast
The dangers that round her be ;
And she sinks, with her shivering crew aghast,
In the trough of the dreadful sea.

But, O ! how soundly the seamen sleep,
Though the tempests around them rave,—
Though their couch be the breast of the stormy deep,
And their pillow the wild sea wave.

Roll on, roll on ! ye may well be proud,
My own everlasting waters !
O'er thousands ye sweep, without coffin or shroud,
Of earth's best sons and daughters.

The young—the beautiful—have graves
In your depths that were sounded never ;
Then dash o'er them all with your proudest waves,
But they will not be yours for ever !

To the Spirit of Burns.

LORD of the Scottish lyre ! though death
Has reft thee from this scene of ours,
Does not thy spirit oft descend

And hover round its bowers ?
Yes, sure it does—for dear to thee
Thy Scotia's weal must ever be.

Thou with thy country's lowly poor
Wert not ashamed to sympathise,
And in immortal numbers sing
Their sorrows and their joys ;
Oh ! thine was the unrivalled lyre,
That glowed with nature's truest fire.

And thou wert full of love to all,
Even to the humblest flower of spring—
For thou did'st mourn the daisy's fate,
As 'twere a living thing,
Which once more budding in thy lay,
Shall bloom and never feel decay.

The spirit of devotion pure
Breathes on thy cottar's hallowed strain,
And lifts our drooping thoughts to him
Who over all doth reign,
The King of kings, whose gracious ear
Still hears the prayer that is sincere.

But, oh ! thou poet of the heart,
Whose fame shall last to latest days,
Sure beauty never lovelier shone
Than in thy Doric lays :
How winning, sweet, beyond compare,
The village maiden's painted there.

Thy soul was independence self,
From every taint of meanness free ;
Low, venal avarice met thy scorn,
And vile hypocrisy,
That mocks with formal lip his God,
Writhed 'neath thy satire's powerful rod.

Illustrious bard ! thy brief career
Seemed like a fleeting meteor bright,
That gilds a moment's space the sky,
Then vanishes from sight ;
So passed thy brilliant mind away,
Freed from its prison house of clay.

The Soldier's Bride.

CANTO FIRST.

RETURNING summer with refulgent mien,
Once more revived and brightened up the scene ;
On every side were sights and sounds of mirth,
As if all sorrow had forsook the earth.
Couched in the thorny brake, the linnet sweet
Trilled forth its lay, so soft and exquisite ;
While, ever and anon on pinion proud,
The sky-lark carolled from the fleecy cloud,
Like to a happy spirit love-inspired,
With thrilling bursts of rapture never tired.
Nursed into life by summer's genial breath,
A thousand wild flowers spread o'er mead and heath ;
And, gracing oft the bleakest spot, appeared
The "bonny broom" to Scottish song endeared.
Thrown off his wintry garb of white at last,
In which he warred with many a stormy blast,
Morven upreared his giant form to view,
Clothed in his sweetest robe of summer blue.
Even ocean's self assumed a look more bright,
And round his caverns murmured with delight.
With head upraised above the briny stream
The seal lay basking in the grateful beam ;
And, as he winged his flight along the wave,
The wild sea-gull a scream of gladness gave.

From Castle Sinclair's lordly turrets high
There is a banner floating in the sky,
And loud and shrill the bagpipes' martial sound
Is waking all the slumbering echoes round.

Before that princely pile have met to-day,
A stately band of youthful warriors gay,
And well they look, all clad in plaid and trews
Of Sinclair tartan, with its brilliant hues.
That stately corps the flower of Caithness seem,
Culled from each mountain-strath, and glen, and stream,
From the rude rocks that stem the Pentland tide,
To where the wild Ord frowns in naked pride ;
A thousand strong, they form a splendid sight,
With dirk and broad-sword all equipped for fight,
And ready at their leader's call to wield
Their warlike weapons on a foreign field.
And, who is he, the leader of that corps,
Whom they so gladly follow and adore ?
A chief of noble birth and talents rare,
Sprung from the lordly line of high St. Clair.
How well the beauteous garb of red and green
Becomes his handsome form and manly mien ;
How gracefully the Highland bonnet now,
With eagle plumage, rests upon his brow ;
A soldier every inch—with sword in hand,
He looks a leader worthy of his band,
Who now all eagerly around him press,
While thus he greets them in a brief address :—
“ My brave young friends, your soldierly array
With proud emotions fills my breast to-day ;
For in your bold undaunted looks I see
Of gallant deeds to come the guarantee.
The Swedish Monarch, so renowned in fight,
Who never draws his sword but for the right,
Has sent a courier from his Baltic shore,
To supplicate the aid of our claymore,
Against the Danish and Norwegian foe,
Now linked together for his overthrow ;
And 'twould with shame the name of Caithness brand
Should we refuse to him our helping hand.
Is there, I ask, a youth of spirit here,
One breast to whom the voice of fame is dear,
At home in sluggish indolence would lie,

And, craven-like, ignobly live and die,
When lasting honour may be gained abroad,
In freedom's sacred cause, the cause of God ?
These hearty cheers your firm resolve declare
To follow me, and all my fortunes share,
And loudly say, that sooner far than yield,
You'll die like Scotsmen on the battle-field.
To-morrow, at high noon, if serve the gale,
Direct for Norway I intend to sail,
And when the pipe and drum their summons sound,
To start with me you'll all be ready found."
He said, and one loud answering cheer was given
From rank to rank that seemed to rend the heaven.

With train of clouds that retinue his way,
And gild his triumph at the close of day,
The sun is hastening down the concave steep,
To shine in other climes beyond the deep ;
Now on the Pentland billow's glowing crest,
His broad and burning disk is seen to rest,
Now lessening to a curve of golden light,
He sinks at once from the spectator's sight.
Earth, sea, and sky, lie hushed without a sound,
As in a trance of adoration bound ;
While, heralding her sister orbs on high,
The Evening Star looks down with placid eye.

O'er yon white beach that fringes Sinclair's bay,
Now arm in arm a loving couple stray ;
To two fond hearts the time and place how meet,
The dreamy billow murmuring at their feet.
In close and eager converse they appear ;
Why does the lady shed that blinding tear ?
Why o'er her delicate and beauteous brow,
Is thrown that air of pensive sadness now ?
Perhaps the sprightly soldier at her side,
So long her young heart's chiefest joy and pride—
Is soon to leave her for a foreign strand,
The youthful leader of yon gallant band.

'Tis so—and with a voice and look of love,
Whose eloquence the hardest heart might move,
She pleads to go with him across the sea,
To share his lot, whatever that may be ;
While he, in terms affectionate and mild,
Thus argues with her 'gainst a scheme so wild.

“ To share my fortunes on a hostile shore !
Nay, dearest Lucy, think of this no more.
Thy tender frame, nursed in the lap of ease,
Would never bear the tossing of the seas,
Much less the hardships of a rude campaign,
With all its dangers and its sights of pain ;
Amid those horrors thou wouldst sink aghast,
And, like a sweet flower, perish in the blast ;
Then chase the wild idea from thy mind,
Trust all to heaven, and stay at home resigned.”

“ Thou conjurest phantoms up by land and sea,
To shake my purpose, but they daunt not me.
Whatever scenes of danger may befall,
My spirit tells me I can bear them all.
I'm but a feeble woman, it is true,
And heretofore life's hardships never knew,
But in my bosom, weak as I appear,
There beats a heart that is unknown to fear.
Oh ! if thou would'st not wish that heart to break,
Let me not pine at home for mercy's sake.”

“ Believe me, Lucy, when I do avow,
'Tis true regard alone that makes me now
So loth to listen to your wild request,
Though with the deepest tenderness impressed.
In those rude scenes of bloodshed and of strife
Which form the drama of a soldier's life,
Thy presence, love, could only be to me
A constant source of deep anxiety,
And damp my courage when I ought to wield
My glittering falchion in the tented field.”

“Nay, George, thou deem'st me weak indeed, or thou
Would'st ne'er have spoken as thou doest now.
Fear not for me, nor for a moment think
That I would cause thee from thy duty shrink,
Or damp thy zeal, to me however dear,
When in the battle's front thou should'st appear.
I say again, and say it too with pride,
I bear the spirit of a soldier's bride,
And though I may not join thee in the field,
There is assistance too which I may yield.
Life—even the gayest—has its hours of gloom,
That cross its path like shadows from the tomb.
The bravest man that e'er drew battle blade
Needs woman's kindly sympathetic aid ;
And thou too, brave and gallant though thou be,
Wilt lack the presence of a friend like me.
Yes—let me go to cheer thee 'mid thy toil,
On Norway's savage and romantic soil.
I'll soothe thy sorrows when thou art depressed,
And calm thy troubled spirit down to rest ;
And if thou should'st be wounded in the fight,
Though heaven forbid I e'er should see that sight,
I'll tend thy sick bed, charm thy pains away,
And be thy kind physician night and day.”

“But, dearest Lucy, my true-hearted maid,
If I should fall beneath some hostile blade,
What would become of thee, a stranger left
'Mong savage foes, of thy protector reft ?
Alas for thee ! the very thought indeed
Doth make my heart with agony to bleed.
Oh ! I intreat thee then to think no more
Of following me to Norway's rugged shore,
Where wild vindictive war his banner rears,
And, if thou dost regard me, dry those tears,
That only grieve my heart, and for thy sake
Would almost tempt me 'gainst my will to break
The faith I've pledged to Sweden's royal lord—
A coward's deed that would disgrace my sword ;

Nay, should I act so mean and base a part,
Thou would'st thyself despise me in thy heart.
But truce to all unpleasant thoughts like these,
Once more I beg thee keep thy mind at ease,
And let me see thee at our ball to-night,
As heretofore in all thy beauty's light.
'Twould fill my darkling bosom with despair,
If thou, my lovely Lucy, wert not there,
To cheer me with thy smile so kind and true,
One parting kiss, and now till then adieu."

To-night, in Castle Sinclair's spacious hall,
There is a princely banquet and a ball ;
And brilliant is the rout, with " pearl and plume,"
The noblest blood of Caithness grace the room ;
And youth and beauty by the lamp's bright glare,
To music's strains are lightly bounding there,
And form a scene as happy as 'tis bright,
On which the eye reposes with delight.
Among the gayest Sinclair treads the dance,
Joy lighting up his manly countenance ;
To-morrow's sun will see him and his band
Perhaps for ever quit their native land ;
Yet if the thought hath in his mind a place,
It clouds not now the sunshine of his face.
And she, the lady of his heart is nigh,
All grace and beauty charming every eye ;
But late she seemed to deepest grief a prey,
Now she appears the gayest of the gay,
And threads from time to time the mazy dance,
With youth's light step and pleasure's sparkling glance ;
Sure some bright thought has chased the cloud away,
That late so heavy on her spirit lay.
And why should she indulge in selfish grief ?
Her lover's absence doubtless will be brief ;
'Tis honour calls him to the battle plain,
But he shall soon return to her again,
With glory's " laurelled wreath" upon his brow,
And at the altar consummate his vow.

Sure such her thought—why then should Lucy fear,
Or dim her eye's sweet lustre with a tear ?
Meantime the sparkling wine cup circles free,
And swells the music in its liveliest key,
And sweeps the dance through the resounding hall,
Until the very portraits on the wall—
The imaged forms of chiefs of other days,
Now dead alike to censure or to praise—
To fancy seemed, as in their frames they shook,
To view the scene with sympathetic look.

'Tis morn—a bark is riding in the bay,
With Sweden's royal banner broad and gay,
Proudly unfurled, and flaunting in the breeze,
As she were queen and mistress of the seas :
She comes to fetch the Caithness troops away,
And seaward must proceed without delay.

Already echoing o'er the rugged strand,
The pipe and drum have roused yon gallant band,
That hasten to the beach in proud array,
Their armour flashing in the solar ray.
And with them come a fond and friendly crowd,
Whose grief at parting with the corps is loud.
It is a scene to touch the roughest heart,
And cause the tear from pity's eye to start ;
For some, 'tis certain, of that youthful band
Will never more behold their native land,
But sink, alas ! in war's wild bloody game,
No friends to pay their last sad rites to them.

Hark to the summons of the signal gun !
The hour is up—bright beams the noonday sun ;
The breeze is fair, and fair too is the tide—
But where is Sinclair's young and lovely bride ?
Why comes she not among the sister train,
To bid him farewell ere he cross the main ?
None knows—last eve, when all was passing gay,
She from the brilliant ball-room stole away,

And though each spot has been explored around,
No trace of her has anywhere been found.
Her friends are plunged in grief, and all regret
The lovely Lucy's dark mysterious fate—
And Sinclair's manly spirit is distressed,
Though he must hide his sorrow in his breast ;
No damping look of sadness he must wear,
Now at the outset of his proud career,
But show himself, when warlike banners wave,
A leader worthy to command the brave.

Among that sprightly band of volunteers,
There is a youth that by his look appears
Of high descent, and of a form and face
That might the loveliest female figure grace ;
Scarce eighteen summers old he seems as yet,
But on his brow is manly courage writ ;
And his blue eye, that beams with placid rays,
A brighter flash of light at times displays,
As if inspired with some exalted thought,
Or happy dream from youthful fancy caught,
And when he speaks, his voice so sweet and clear,
Falls like a tone of music on the ear ;
But converse he appears to shun—in sooth,
Some mystery seems to hang around the youth,
'Twas but of late he joined that warlike corps,
Maxwell his name—of him they know no more.

With crowded canvas swelling to the gale,
The royal transport hath at length set sail ;
And fleetly wafted by the sunny breeze,
Lo ! with what air of gracefulness and ease,
And queen-like majesty, she walks the tide,
And from her beauteous forehead flings aside
The foamy surge, that far behind her flows,
And like a stream of brightest sunshine glows.

'Twas night—the vessel glided on her way,
And all except the watch in slumber lay

When Sinclair dreamed he saw before him rise
From out the deep a form in female guise,
And scan the vessel round from stem to stern,
As if its purpose there she sought to learn.
Upon the briny wave that swelled around,
She stood erect as upon stable ground,
And held on high above the ocean flood,
A shroud that seemed all covered o'er with blood.
Around her shoulders, loose and unconfined,
Her sea-green locks were streaming on the wind,
And red and swollen with indignant ire,
Her keen eye glittered like a coal of fire.
She cast on Sinclair a menacing look,
Which he at first had scarcely nerve to brook,
Then in a hollow voice the sceptre grim,
With glaring eyeballs thus accosted him :
“ Back, whilst thou can'st, unto thy native land,
Thou reckless soldier with thy hireling band,
For, if thou dare set foot on Norway's shore,
Thou and thy minions shall return no more.
The sword is whetting that shall drink thy blood ;
A curse hangs o'er thee both on field and flood ;
Norway, whose soil for cowards has no room,
Her sons hath summoned and pronounced thy doom.
The wolf and vulture on her hills that breed,
Shall on thy slaughtered followers richly feed ;
Their bones unburied, where they fall shall lie,
And bleach and wither 'neath the Polar sky ;
Then, if thou would'st escape this fearful fate,
Back with thy minions ere it be too late.”

Thus having said, away she seemed to glide,
Then slowly sank into her native tide.
Sinclair awoke (as this wild vision closed)
With throbbing pulse and spirit discomposed ;
The warning sounds that lately struck his ear
In trembling fancy still he seemed to hear,
And still that fearful shroud of bloody dye
Was pictured vividly before his eye.

But though, at first, he yielded to dismay,
His wonted courage soon resumed its sway ;
To alter now his course and homeward steer,
He felt would argue an unmanly fear,
And his proud spirit could not brook the thought
Of aught like cowardice, whate'er his lot ;
Better to die upon the field of fame
A thousand fold than live a life of shame.
Tired of his berth, in which he tossing lay,
For sleep, though wooed, had fled from him away,
Sinclair forsook his weary couch, and now
Repaired on deck to cool his feverish brow,
With the sweet breeze that gently swelled the sail,
And was to him a luxury to inhale.
The night so soft and exquisitely fair,
Might well have charmed the bosom of despair.
The glorious summer moon was shining bright,
With scarce a passing cloud to dim her light,
That on the silvery billow quivering lay
In rival splendour of the orb of day.

What draws the Sinclair's eager notice now ?
Seated alone beside the vessel's prow,
A slender youth in seeming pensive mood
Gazes on ocean's boundless solitude,
With moistened eye, as if his thoughts did roam
Back to his kindred and his native home ;
Yet frequent throws from off that bright expanse
Towards his chief a kind peculiar glance.
'Tis that young soldier, who the night before
The vessel sailed joined Sinclair's warlike corps,
Maxwell the name he bears, but all beside
With dogged firmness he thinks fit to hide.

The stripling's look, so delicate and shy,
Hath powerfully arrested Sinclair's eye,
And, as he scanned the pleasing features o'er,
"I've seen," thought he, "that youthful face before,"
Which ('twas no doubt a fancy of the brain)
Brought to his memory vividly again,

That of his beautiful and missing bride,
As she appeared in all her virgin pride.
"Soldier," exclaimed the chief, "unless mine eye
Deceive me much beneath this midnight sky,
Thy look and manner both combined denote
Thou wert not bred up in a peasant's cot,
Or born to mingle with the rude and low,
In vulgar life—is this not really so?"

"Excuse me, Chief, if I must silent be
On this unwelcome subject even with thee.
Some future time, if heaven preserve my life,
Amid the dangers with which war is rife,
I may the secret of my birth reveal,
Which now I deem it better to conceal.
This much, at present, may suffice to say,
That from my parents' roof I stole away,
Fired by a youthful zeal to join thy band,
For much I've longed to wield the battle brand,
And win the soldier's honest meed of fame,
On fields that ring with victory's loud acclaim."

"Brave youth ! thy martial spirit I esteem,
But, yet, methinks thou dost unhappy seem,
If I may judge from that pale look of thine,
Where grief is legible in every line.
Prithee, what secret care disturbs thy breast,
To make thee thus forego thy nightly rest,
And here on deck thy lonely vigil keep,
When all thy brother soldiers are asleep ?
Dost thou recall to mind with fond regret
The friends thou left'st at home disconsolate,
Or touched with youthful love's impassioned flame,
Brood o'er some gentle heart thou must not name ?"
On this a deep and sudden blush o'erspread
The soldier's cheek, while with a sigh he said :
"Tis so, my chief, I feel at times o'ercome
With grief when thinking of my friends at home,
And true it is, with this regret is joined
Another feeling of a tenderer kind ;

Still there is something else, I must avow,
Preys more than all upon my spirit now—
I would not augur ill, yet much I fear
This expedition, Chief, will cost us dear.”

“What makes thee think so? soldier, dost suppose
My corps will tamely sink before their foes,
Or yield that flag on which is blazoned bright
The Scottish lion rampant for the fight?”

“No, my good Chief, I do not doubt our men
Will quit themselves right valiantly—but then
If fate hath said, *they go to find a tomb*,
Their utmost valour cannot change their doom.
Before my dreaming eye there rose to-night
A fearful vision of a coming fight,
Which even in memory painfully doth thrill
My sickened heart, and makes me shudder still.
Methought a savage host, embrued with gore,
Rushed instantaneously upon our corps,
And cut them down in one appalling mass,
As mowers with the scythe cut down the grass,
Until the spot was covered with our slain,
And blood appeared to deluge all the plain.
And on mine ear came shrieks and sounds of woe,
Mingled with hideous laughter from the foe,
That with insulting scorn and brandished blade
Trampled upon and danced above the dead.”

“Thy dream was strangely wild, I must admit,
But why should'st thou feel so disturbed by it?
For what are all such dreams at best but vain
And shadowy illusions of the brain,
Which fancy conjures up, when reason throws
Her curb aside, and sinks into repose?
Let not thy young heart then desponding brood
On fears like these, so groundless and so crude,
For, with God's help, in equal fight my band
Shall ne'er be beat, nor shame their native land.”

Thus having spoke, he bade the youth adieu,
And to his cabin pensively withdrew ;
There as he lay and tossed upon his bed,
Absorbed in thought, unto himself he said :
" 'Tis strange, I know not whence the feeling springs,
But to this youth my yearning bosom clings
With spell-like power, which I cannot explain,
As we were linked by some mysterious chain.
More strange 'tis still, that he as well as I
Should both have visions of some danger nigh.
I put no faith in fancies of the kind,
And yet, I own, they much disturb my mind.
Would I were sure that they were kindly sent
By heaven to warn me of some dire event,
Or fatal accident in battle's shape
Which yet by timely care I may escape ;
Would I could think so, but 'tis vain to guess,
Or speculate on such a point as this ;
Befall what may, I now must forward go,
And with unshrinking courage face the foe."

Thus with himself he communed till his ear
Caught the glad bagpipe's morning summons near,
And at the inspiring sound despondence fled
With all her train of doubts, and in her stead
Came thoughts of glory on the battle plain,
Brightening his soul as sunrise did the main.

CANTO SECOND.

THREE days have passed, by favouring breezes marked,
Since Sinclair with his gallant corps embarked,
And now the coast of Norway swells in sight,
Flushed with the evening's rich and gorgeous light.
Freshens the breeze, and, stooping on her side,
The stately vessel rushes through the tide ;
And every moment brings him nearer to
The land where he shall deeds of valour do—
Such deeds as, sounded by the trump of fame,
Will spread abroad and glorify his name.
So Hope, the flatterer, whispers in his ear,
And points in prospect to a proud career.

With long chain-cable stretching from her bow,
The vessel snugly rides at anchor now ;
And sick of sea, impatient for the land,
The Scottish troops are boated to the strand ;
To them how passing sweet to tread once more
Earth's hallowed soil though on a hostile shore.
Within the covert of a quiet glade,
Dotted with straggling fir, their camp is made ;
And to secure the troops against surprise,
When sleep with opiate wand hath sealed their eyes,
At proper intervals along the ground,
Night sentinels are posted all around.
Stretched by the kindling watch-fire some repose,
And, in their dreams, already fight their foes,
Or meet their happy friends at home once more,
The toils and dangers of their warfare o'er ;

While some in lively converse spend the hour,
Relate wild tales of fierce and lawless power,
Or sing some native bard's impassioned lays,
That breathe of home and rustic beauty's praise.

In one of those small groups that whiled away
The hours with legends of the olden day,
Sat Maxwell listening with attentive ear,
His blue eye moistened with the frequent tear,
As some affecting passage, void of art,
With gentle pity seemed to touch his heart ;
At length he yields unto his mate's request,
To contribute his story 'mong the rest,
And while the dying watch-fire glimmered pale,
He told this wild and melancholy tale.

STORY OF THE BLACK CHIEF.

Three changeful centuries have passed away,
Since Reginald of Keiss (so legends say)
Lived in his old hereditary tower,
A bloated chieftain of despotic power,
Whose sole delight in feud and rapine lay,
And darker deeds that shun the light of day.
His abject vassals, while they feared his rod,
With cringing haste obeyed his slightest nod.
Cruel and proud, his dark licentious soul
Spurned at religion, and disdained controul ;
Yet, though he laughed at all religious creeds,
He duly kissed the rood, and told his beads,
And kept besides a reverend priest in pay,
To pardon and confess him every day.
And Father Gairey, complaisant and shrewd,
High in the Black Chief's estimation stood,
And, by insinuation's pleasing art,
Had got himself entwined around his heart.
In early youth at famed Bologna bred,
In occult science he was deeply read ;
Knew all the mysteries of priestcraft well,
And was a master at the book and bell.

Lord Oliphant, who was a sportsman keen,
With hound and horn had all day hunting been,
And now returned at twilight's shadowy hour,
Held high carousal in his ancient tower.
Around his board were met a jolly crew
Of boon companions whom for years he knew,
Bold, roystering fellows, sprung of Danish race,
And, like himself, enthusiasts in the chase.

With radiant eye, and sweetly blooming cheek,
His lovely daughter Rose, the flower of Wick,
For beauty's winning charms admired by all,
Was seen from time to time to grace the hall,
And with her maiden presence, soft and mild,
Calm down the revel when it grew too wild.

A horn hath sounded in the court below,
Enters a serving man with formal bow.
"A reverend priest, outside, doth humbly seek
Permission with my gracious Lord to speak."
"With me," cried Oliphant, "why, what can he
Have, at such hour as this, to say to me?
No ghostly aid, at present, I require,
Thank heaven, I ween, from either monk or friar;
It must be something of importance deep,
That brings him here when people go to sleep.
Haste, fetch the fellow in without delay,
I marvel much what he hath got to say."

With sable hood, that half concealed his face,
And studied look of sanctity and grace,
Entered the monk, and bending slight his frame,
Invoked a blessing in the Virgin's name,
On Oliphant, and all that shared his feast,
Then paused, with both hands folded on his breast.

"Whence com'st thou, friar? prithee take a seat,
Methinks, my reverend guest doth travel late."
"From Keiss, my Lord, I've come," the monk replied,
"I like sometimes to walk at eventide—"

Thou 'lt pardon me, I hope, at this late hour,
For thus intruding in thy noble tower ;
But business of the Black Chief's brings me here ;
I've got a private message for your ear,
Which, when you've answered, I must haste away,
You know Sir Reginald brooks no delay."

" Well, since you must thus hasten back to Keiss,
Speak out your message—is it war or peace ?
There are no secrets 'twixt your chief and me,
And those around are all my friends you see."
" Sir Reginald instructs me, then, to say,"
Replied the monk, with visage long and grey,
" He much admires your charming daughter Rose,
That peerless flower, as every body knows ;
So hopes you 'll grant the lady for his bride ;
But begs to say, that if his suit 's denied,
He 'll take her from thee speedily by force—
This hath he sworn, and will perform of course."

" Ha ! said he so ? My daughter carry hence
Against my will by dint of violence !
No ! while this arm of mine can wield a brand,
While Auld Wick's iron walls are seen to stand.
Tell your Black Chief from me when you return,
His sought alliance with contempt I spurn ;
Nay, sooner than behold my child his bride
I 'd see her buried in yon whelming tide.
As for thyself, 'tis well thou art a priest,
Whose sacred calling claims respect at least,
Else, for the insulting message thou dost bring,
By all the saints, I 'd treat thee to a swing
From yonder casement for a full half hour—
Begone ! and tell your Chief I scorn his power."

On this the monk, who saw a tempest brew,
Just crossed himself and silently withdrew.
The guests applaud the spirit of their host,
And ridicule the Black Chief's empty boast.

"If I mistake not, friends," cried Oliphant,
"Yon priest is full as great a rogue as saint.
Marked ye the expression of the caitiff's eye,
So sinister, ambiguous and sly ;
I much suspect those fellows, I confess,
Who cannot look you boldly in the face ;
At bottom I have found them still to be
Villains of deep and crooked policy."
The monk retired, yet ere he left the place
He lingered in the court a little space,
To have a private word with Angus Bayne,
An old retainer of his Lordship's train.
Bayne seemed at first, from what he said, to shrink
As from a fearful precipice's brink,
And shook his head, and gazed around with fear,
Lest some officious dog should overhear ;
But still the wily monk his purpose pressed,
With all the ready tact which he possessed ;
And now, with look insinuating bland,
He slippeth something into Angus' hand,
Which in a trice hath laid his fears to rest,
And silenced every scruple in his breast.

Sir Reginald, who with impatience burned,
Flew to the monk as soon as he returned.
"How sped the business, Friar ?" Didst thou see
The Oliphant ? What answer is for me ?
What of his lovely daughter ? speak, be brief,
I long to know what said the lordly chief."
"The haughty Oliphant, I grieve to say,"
Replied the monk, "by Satan led astray,
"Rejects contemptuously thy proffered suit,
And spurns thee like a reptile from his foot.
'Tell your Black Chief,' says he, 'I scorn his power,
My daughter Rose shall never grace his tower ;
I'd sooner see her buried 'neath the wave,
Than she should be that tyrant's wedded slave ;'
And, having uttered this, in one wild breath
He ordered me begone, on pain of death !"

"Hell fire, and fury ! said he so ? then I
Shall be revenged on him tho' I should die."
"Tush !" said the monk, "with impious oaths like these
Offend not heaven, but keep thy mind at ease ;
Thou 'lt have a sweet revenge, Sir, take my word,
On yon conceited coxcomb of a Lord."

"Then, ere you left the haughty varlet's tower,
You tried my talisman of sovereign power."
"I did," replied the monk, "and with success,
Auld Wick is thine, from this day forth, I guess ;
Attack it—and when thou beholdest clear"—
The rest he whispered in the Black Chief's ear,
Who by St. Fergus swore the thought was bright,
And slapped the Friar's shoulders with delight.

Sir Reginald, inflamed with deadly hate,
Hath summoned all his vassals small and great,
To muster speedily, by break of day,
At Castle Keiss, equipped in full array,
With warlike implements of every sort,
To storm Lord Oliphant's redoubted fort.
Thither they come, a rude and motley crew,
Whate'er their chief commands obliged to do ;
And Father Gairey hath the whole confessed,
And purged their sins with corresponding haste.

Three days Sir Reginald hath striven in vain
To take Auld Wick with his besieging train ;
For Oliphant defended it with skill,
And drove the assailants back with slaughter still,
Till now the proud knight raged at the delay,
And loss of followers each succeeding day.
But chief with fierce resentment he inveighed
Against the ghostly father who, he said,
Had quite deceived him and misused his gold,
For which he'd have him hanged outside his hold,
In spite of priest and pope, unless he took
The castle in two days by hook or crook.

The fourth day passed inactively away—
Wrapt in their plaids the foiled besiegers lay ;
For now a furious storm of wind and rain
Battered the fields and lashed the indignant main,
That boiled along the rocks with thundering sound,
And flung the foamy spray in sheets around.
All day the knight was in a spleeny mood,
He cursed the elements and spurned his food,
And, like a maniac of his judgment reft,
Struck all that ventured near him right and left.
At eve, as doth a fretful child at breast,
The storm had nearly roared itself to rest ;
But still, at times, in fitful gusts it blew,
While one black cloud concealed the heavens from view.
At length, amid the darkness of the night,
Shone from the battlements a sudden light,
Which by the Black Chief was no sooner seen
Than up to foot he sprang with joyful mien,
And loudly shouted to himself, " By heaven !
It shines at last—the appointed signal's given ;
Friar, thy neck is safe—now for the attack—
This time at least I shan't be driven back."

He orders now his followers to advance
Against the castle fearlessly at once ;
They reach the bridge—as 'twere by magic wand
It drops down silently, and that wild band
Are safe across, protected by the hour
And friendly aid from the beleagured tower.
Who is yon traitor that receives them there,
With conscious guilt depicted in his air ?
'Tis Angus Bayne, who hath for sake of gold
Betrayed his master and the fortress sold.
Deeming himself secure from night attack,
Nor dreaming once of treachery so black,
Lord Oliphant amused the passing hour
At chess with a domestic of the tower ;
While Bayne, as special warder for the night,
Came frequent in to say that all was right.

Is that the billow that with heavy sound
Bursts on the rude and iron rocks around ?
Louder it grows, and trampling footsteps near
The listener now may quite distinctly hear.
Struck with the strange and still increasing noise,
Lord Oliphant into the casement flies ;
Why do his features blanch ? a sudden gleam
Of broken moonlight o'er the ground doth stream,
And to his startled eye reveals the foe,
Headed by Bayne, in powerful force below.
" O righteous God ! " he cried, " that knave hath played
The traitor's part, and we are all betrayed ;
Rouse up the garrison—my sword—my sword !
Destruction seize that perjured wretch abhorred ! "
He said, and dashed into the court below,
Where strove his brave adherents with the foe.

Aided by torchlight, gallantly awhile
They fight, and victory seems on them to smile,—
Led on by Oliphant, whose powerful brand
Wreaks deadly vengeance on the Black Chief's band ;
And now, among that fierce and savage train,
His eye hath caught a sudden glance of Bayne,—
And, rushing towards him in frantic haste,
He thrusts his sword into that traitor's breast.
" There, take thy merited reward," he cried,
Thou son of Judas, and to hell allied."

Borne down by numbers and superior strength,
His small and gallant band hath sunk at length ,
And now, although he sees that all is lost,
Almost alone he combats with a host,
And, nerved with all the spirit of despair,
Deals fearful slaughter round him everywhere
Among the foe, who, for a moment stand,
Awed by the terror of his single brand.
" Cowards ! for shame ! " roars out Sir Reginald,
" From Oliphant alone d' ye shrink appall'd ?
Trip up his heels—surround him—hem him close—

Or by the rood he 'll drive you in the fosse."
They press around—his blood with fury boils,
And as a lion from the hunter's toils
He bursts impetuous through their close array,
And, for a brief space, holds them all at bay.
But vain his efforts, pierced with many a wound,
He drops at last, exhausted on the ground ;
Thick heaves his breath—life's sands are ebbing fast,
The gallant Oliphant hath sighed his last !

On this a yell of triumph rends the skies—
"Auld Wick is ours," the Black Chief proudly cries ;
"Now for my bride." The castle's searched around
From side to side, but Rose cannot be found,—
Who in a secret chamber trembling lay,
Amid the horrors of that fatal fray.

Thus disappointed, baffled of the prize
Which he had deemed secure before his eyes,
The Black Chief's rage at once excessive grew,—
He gnashed his teeth, and violently flew
From place to place—then like a fiend inspired,
He fiercely roared out—"Let the fort be fired !"

The word is caught—as by a lightning stroke,
The castle blazes through a cloud of smoke ;
Fanned by the breeze the fiery current spreads,
Startling with horrid glare night's dunest shades,
And soon the whole, except the donjon tower,
Yields to the flame's wild devastating power.

But where is Rose, the ornament and pride
Of Auld Wick Castle while it crowned the tide ?
Alas ! she, too, hath sunk a hapless prey
To those wild flames, secreted where she lay,
And thus, in beauty's vernal bloom and grace,
Perished the last and loveliest of her race.

Here closed the youth his tale of olden time,
So full of dark barbarity and crime ;

And with his comrades stretched along the ground,
Soon after sank into repose profound.

Meantime 'tis rumoured that the Scottish band
Had disembarked on Romsdahl's quiet strand ;
Through every hamlet hath the tidings spread,
And mingled rage and consternation bred.
In all directions couriers post away,
To bid the peasants arm without delay,
And signal fires are now seen blazing bright
On every neighbouring cliff and mountain height.
Roused at the summons, armed with brand and spear,
From every point they hasten far and near,
And mustering strong upon the midnight wold,
A grave and hasty consultation hold,
Whether or not they should attack the foe,
And strive to check him ere he farther go.

CANTO THIRD.

THE pipe's shrill note hath roused the Scottish band,—
Bright beams the morn, their first on foreign land ;
The lark pours forth his matin song with glee ;
The blackbird loudly whistles from the tree ;
Glitter the dew drops on each blushing flower
That opes its bosom to the radiant hour ;
And distant mountain-top and sylvan stream
With joy seem smiling in the ruddy beam.

'Mong Sinclair's young, intrepid volunteers,
The scene all life and spirit now appears ;
Burning for battle, with impatient air,
They strike their tents, and for the march prepare ;
And soon in full and orderly array,
With steady pace, the column moves away,
To join Munkhaven, whose warlike forces gain
Each day fresh laurels from the baffled Dane.
'Mong pine clad mountains full of steep defiles,
There is a valley stretching up for miles ;
Through this the Scottish chief pursues his route,
Despoiling all the hamlets round about :
Nor till the third day gilds the heaven's blue arch
Meets he with aught to check his onward march.
Now full in front a mountain gorge appears,
Which to the eye a savage aspect wears ;
Narrow and steep on either side arise
Dark threatening cliffs of a gigantic size,
Whereon the eagle undisturbed might dwell
And rear his young and hardy offspring well.

At bottom ran a deep and rapid stream,
Scarce ever brightened by the summer beam ;
A narrow foot-path on one side alone,
With tangling shrubs at intervals o'ergrown,
Was all the passage that the traveller found,
Without a circuit of some miles around.
Few ever trod that hidden path of fear,
Except the young adventurous mountaineer,
Or the wild goat that browsed, on summer days,
In spots on which 'twas dreadful even to gaze.

While now their leader hesitating stood,
Before the pass so perilous and rude,
A youth in peasant garb, with gun in hand,
Approached with cautious step the Scottish band,
And making to their chief obeisance low,
Wished him God speed against the common foe.
At first, mistrustful of his bearing smooth,
Sinclair with searching look addressed the youth :
“ Young man, if thou com'st hither as a spy,
As I suspect, into my ranks to pry,
Thou 'lt expiate thy treachery on the spot,
By heaven ! I 'll cause thee instantly be shot ;
Then, in a word, declare to me the truth.”
“ No traitor foe am I,” replied the youth,
“ Or native of the land ; by birth a Swede,
I come to offer thee my friendly aid ;
A shepherd near this spot, not long ago,
Each nook and crevice of the pass I know,
And well I may, for oft from early dawn,
Until the sun's bright visage was withdrawn,
I 've clambered 'mid these rocks, so stern and grey,
Guarding my master's charge from beasts of prey ;
Therefore, if you will trust yourself to me,
I 'll guide you through without reward or fee.”
“ What of the peasantry ? is 't true that they,
As rumour speaks, are banded in array,
And purpose to attack my troops ? if so
You 'll doubtless somewhat of their movements know.”

"The rumour thou hast heard," rejoined the youth,
"Believe me, Chief, is quite devoid of truth.
From farther Gulbrands I have come to-day,
And thou canst safely credit what I say.
The news of thy approach, now widely spread,
Hath paralyzed the peasantry with dread,
So that they scarce know what to think or say,
But stand with lifted hands in pale dismay.
They offer thee resistance ! 'tis a joke—
A set of cravens of a coward stock.
'Tis true old Sigelstadt of Ringeboe,
A babbler, in his dotage years ago,
Has urged them strongly to attack your band,
But they 've no wish to feel the Scottish brand ;
No, no, thou need'st not be afraid that they
Will rashly throw their precious lives away.
As to the pass, thou safely mayest depend
On my experience"—

"Lead the way then friend,"

The Sinclair said, and in a cheering tone
He bade his trusty Highlanders move on.
At length the troops with hesitating tread,
The steep and toilsome pass begin to thread,
Whose beetling brow and darkly yawning throat,
Fill even the bravest with uneasy thought.
Meantime the peasant who conducts the corps,
With loaded gun walks briskly on before.
Methinks a smile is glistening in his eye,
As to the cliffs above him, stern and high,
He casts from time to time a stealthy look,
And once his frame with strong emotion shook.
What does that nervous agitation mean,
And glance ambiguous he would not have seen ?
Each rugged step familiarly he knows,
Nor can he surely dread surprise from foes.
The middle of the pass is now attained.
Lead on—the farther point will soon be gained,
And then the troops will have an open space,
Where they can march again with quickened pace.

But where's the guide ! behind a jutting brow,
He suddenly hath darted off, and now,
The dread suspicion which he must not speak,
Rushes o'er Sinclair's mind, and pales his cheek,
That the youth's tale was but a specious lie,
And he himself beyond all doubt a spy,
Sent by the natives to mislead his band,
While they themselves were likely close at hand.
Shall he proceed, or back his steps retrace ?
The peril seemed the same in either case ;
So, at all hazards, he would now advance,
And strive to clear the rugged pass at once.
What startling sound is that arrests the ear,
As from a gun or huntsman's rifle near ?
More loud and frequent the reports become—
Amazement strikes the advancing columns dumb,
Blood hath already dyed the narrow ground,
And Sinclair's men are falling thickly round.
Oh heaven ! suspecting not the dire onslaught,
The Scottish troops in ambuscade are caught ;
Hemmed in, and close attacked in front and rear,
And from the cliffs, on each side frowning near,
Where'er the cruel foe can kneel or stand,
One murderous fire is poured on Sinclair's band.
And Kringin's mountain stream is red with blood,
Which ne'er till now had stained its lonely flood.
Now they have gained at last the open plain,
Though of their numbers few, alas ! remain,
And with their gallant leader, sword in hand,
With desperate fury charge the peasant band,
That half recoil before the onset driven,
Their still increasing ranks asunder riven.
Again they rally and again fall back,
Before the hardy Highlanders' attack ;
While Sinclair cheers them on, and waves his sword,
To charge once more for life the savage horde.
Why do they falter now in mid career,
As if their hearts were struck with sudden fear ?

Alas for them ! their leader wounded falls,
And more than thousand foes that sight appals
The gallant few, who deem it all in vain
The unequal combat longer to maintain,
Outnumbered as they are, and, sadder still,
Without e'en one their leader's place to fill.
And that fair youth, who midst the thickest fray
Showed not the smallest symptom of dismay,
Now deadly pale and overwhelmed with grief,
Weeps like a child beside the dying chief.
One burst of tender feeling hath revealed
The truth, which can no longer be concealed—
'Tis Lucy's self, in male disguise, 'tis she
That o'er him bends in deepest agony !
"O Lucy !" sighed the chief, "why did'st not thou,
My dearly loved, reveal thyself till *now*—
Till this sad hour, when I must yield to fate,
And leave thee here forlorn and desolate,
With none to shield thee from our common foe ;
O God ! this forms my bitterest cup of woe.
If thou wert safe I could have died in peace,
And in the grave from sorrow found release ;
But fear for thee doth wring my sinking heart,
And gives to death's last pang a keener smart.
There is a thick cloud settling on mine eye,
Let me have one embrace before I die ;
Now fare thee well !" words failed to utter more—
One long drawn sigh he heaved, and all was o'er.

A peasant leader hath approached the spot,
Where Lucy broods in misery o'er her lot ;
For he hath heard the rumour as it flies,
That she is Sinclair's lady in disguise.
Stained is his sword with blood, and he appears
At first to smile in triumph at her tears.
Alas ! and must that noble-hearted maid
Quail 'neath his haughty glance and murderous blade ?
No ! starting quickly from her sorrow's trance,
She shews the spirit of her sex at once ;

And while a glow of indignation high
Reddens her cheek and sparkles in her eye,
In tone of mingled fortitude and grief,
She thus interrogates that peasant chief.
“What is thy purpose fellow? com'st thou here
To feast thy vengeance o'er my soldier's bier,
And triumph in a wretched female's fate,
Now reft of all and rendered desolate?”

“Not such my purpose, lady, but to shield
Thy person from all harm I've left the field,
No longer doubtful—praise to God on high,
Who to our arms vouchsafes the victory.
Old Ringebo, who led our band to-day
So nobly to the fight, I'm proud to say,
He is my sire—no dotard you'll allow,
Though fourscore years have furrowed o'er his brow,
Myself, I daresay, thou hast seen before,
When as a guide I first approached your corps.”

“Then, thou art that false youth, who didst betray
Our troops to where yon fatal ambush lay.”

“I am, nay more, rejoice in what I did,
For, where's the patriot would not strive to rid
His country of a hired and foreign host,
Come like a plague to desolate the coast?
But, lady, thy brave spirit I admire,
And beauty worthy of a poet's lyre;
And, if thou'lt now accept my proffered hand,
We'll spare the scanty remnant of thy band—
If not, they'll share their late companions' fate,
And thou mayest guess what doth thyself await.”

“Detested villian! com'st thou here to add
Insult to treachery—to drive me mad?
And dar'st thou a proposal make, which I
Than yield assent to sooner far would die.
I spurn thy mercy on such terms as must
Inspire a virtuous bosom with disgust,
All steeped in guile and falsehood as thou art,
A dastard hypocrite without a heart.

The blood of those brave men thou hast betrayed
Calls loud for vengeance on thy guilty head ;
And though a female hand doth strike the blow,
Thy treachery shall not unpunished go :
And brief shall be thy triumph in their fall,
Thou wretch, whose breast no pity owns at all !”
She ceased to speak, and ere he could reply,
Dead on the spot she shot the traitor spy !

Seized on by ruffian foes, and captive led,
A direful fate awaits the Scottish maid ;
For the few soldiers that survive their Chief,
To her, alas ! can render no relief.
O ! that the Swedish force were now at hand
To rescue Lucy from that savage band,
Or that some pitying angel from on high
Would shield her in this sad extremity.

The trumpet's note is swelling on the ear—
And, lo ! a Swedish troop in full career
Are dashing on—a spirit-stirring sight—
Straight for the scene of the disastrous fight.
Onward they come ; and at their head is seen
A gallant chief, of proud undaunted mien ;
His sword, unsheathed and glancing in his hand,
He waves like one accustomed to command ;
That leader is Munkhaven, of high renown,
Who late hath humbled haughty Denmark's crown.
Meantime, the peasant host, when they behold
The troops advancing resolutely bold,
Armed cap-a-pie, and marshalled for the fight,
Bend for their rugged fastnesses their flight ;
And Lucy, too, is dragged with them away
To wild vindictive rage the destined prey.

The brave Munkhaven hath seen their coward flight,
The word is given to charge—and quick as light
Forth flash a hundred sabres on the sight ;
And now, each gallant horseman spurs his steed,
And, like a whirlwind, with resistless speed,

They dash at once on the retreating horde,
With keen avenging carabine and sword.
Hark ! does that loud exulting cheer arise
From the pursuing troop, or foe that flies ?
Again it bursts with an o'erwhelming shout,
From rock and valley echoed round about ;
That cheer is from the Swedish troop, whose brands
Have rescued Lucy from her captors' hands.

The sounds of battle strife have died away
O'er that sad field to be remembered aye,
And melancholy silence once more broods
Amidst her wild and savage solitudes.
Yet, lovely is the eve—in sweetest guise
She comes apparelled from her native skies ;
Heedless alike of human joy or woe,
The face of nature doth no sadness shew,
And, as such tragic fray had never been,
The sun sets brightly with unclouded mien,
And tinges with his richest hue the plain
Where lie the unburied corse of the slain,
There to afford, ere close another day,
A rich repast to birds and beasts of prey.
Already had the vulture eyed afar
That feast of death and sacrifice of war,
And o'er the battle-field, with outstretched wing
And whetted beak seems keenly hovering.

Amid the pale and shadowy moonlight
What mournful scene doth now arrest the sight ?
A burial-party bear, with solemn tread,
The fallen hero to his final bed.
The Scottish pipe is pouring on the gale
Its wild and woe-inspiring funeral wail,
And bitter tears that eloquently speak
Poor Lucy's grief, are coursing down her cheek,
As, without coffin in the desert glade,
She sees her soldier-lover lowly laid.

The Swedish chief a sloop of war hath manned
To carry Lucy to her native land,

With the few soldiers that survive—alas !
To tell the tale of Kringin's bloody pass.
She gains the deck, and now with heavy heart
She almost feels as she were loth to part
From that wild shore, within whose rugged breast
Her hero's dear remains untimely rest.
Meantime the vessel cleaves the billowy tide,
With snow-white canvas swelling o'er her side,
And straight for Wick her destined course pursues,
The gloomy bearer of appalling news.

Escaped the horrors of that dire campaign,
Now Lucy treads her native shore again ;
But, ah ! what change hath grief and blighting thought
O'er her fair form and lovely features wrought.
She marks the scene where she so oft had strayed
With him who slumbers in his narrow bed ;
And, as each well known haunt appears to view,
The fountain of her tears flows forth anew.

The vesper bell hath rung, at close of day,
And, hark ! from yonder convent, lone and grey,
Rich liquid sounds of harmony arise,
In grateful accents swelling to the sky.
Whose the sweet voice that mingles with that choir,
So full of thrilling tenderness and fire ?
'Tis that of Lucy, who with visage pale,
Her thoughts on heaven, hath now assumed the veil,
Retired for ever from a world so rude,
To dwell among that gentle sisterhood,
And spend the fleeting remnant of her days
In holy meditation and in praise.

"THE SOLDIER'S BRIDE" is founded on the following tragical occurrence. In 1612, Colonel George Sinclair, a native of Caithness-shire, and a soldier of fortune, embarked for Norway with a body of troops to assist Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, in his war with Denmark. Sinclair landed at Romsdahl in Norway; and, in his march up the valley of Lessoe, he and his men were surprised in a narrow pass by the peasantry, and cut to pieces, two or three only escaping to tell the mournful tale, among whom was his bride, who accompanied him in the expedition, and, as tradition reports, acquitted herself exactly as represented in the poem.

The Enchanted Island.

ON the broad bosom of the salt sea tide,
But whereabout it matters not to say,
Guarded secure with rocks on every side,
A little isle of barren aspect lay ;
Yet did the natives look on it with pride,
When summer clothed it in its best array,
For tho' no tree nor shrub enriched the view,
The best potatoes, kail, and corn it grew.

Six miles it measured in circumference round,
As near's my muse is able to compute,
Who once or twice rode over all the ground
Upon her Pegasus, a steady brute ;
The shores with "cuddens"* greatly did abound,
With epicures, a fish of small repute,
But which the natives thought exceeding good,
And blessed the sea for giving them such food.

They were a primitive, amphibious race,
That lived as much on water as on land,
With locks unkempt, and weather-beaten face,
And lingo somewhat hard to understand ;
Their little skiffs they managed with a grace
And skill that admiration did command,
And through the roughest seas they bravely steered,
And neither Æolus nor Neptune feared.

* Coal Fish.

Of politics, that bane of social life
In other parts, they never heard the name,
Nor knew that greater curse, religious strife,
Of modern Christians the disgrace and shame,
Which 'gainst the husband often sets the wife,
And keeps the country in a perfect flame ;
From all these evils of the first degree,
The simple natives happily were free.

For bookish lore they were not much renowned,
Nor did they e'er with schemes their brains harass,
So that they slumbered on their beds quite sound,
Unvexed with cares of railways or of gas ;
They thought the sun and not the earth went round,
And that the sapphire sky was made of glass,
While their belief was very strong in ghosts,
And all such " bokies " as frequent sea coasts.

With pious reverence still they close adhered
To all the good old customs of their sires—
At novelties of every kind they sneered—
Ambition was not one of their desires ;
Of turf and stone their cottages they reared—
In middle of the floor they had their fires,
Without a chimney and without a lattice ;
They chiefly lived on " brochan " and potatoes.

Their drink was ever from the crystal rill—
Of that famed aqua yet they nothing knew,
Which men now manufacture from a " still,"
And modern bards have christened " mountain dew ;"
Hence they required no healing draught or pill
To set their stomachs right, as toppers do,
But lived quite healthy to their day of death,
And only died at last for want of breath.

Such was their happy and contented state,
So beautiful and happy to behold,
Unstained by vice, and free from care and debt,
As in the age ycleped the age of gold,

Which ancient bards so highly celebrate,
And modern ones have after them extolled ;
Such bliss was theirs, until, in evil hour,
A tempting spirit drew them in his power.

The great archfiend, that prowleth night and day
Through all the regions of the earth unseen,
Just like a roaring lion for his prey,
Beheld their happiness with envious eyne ;
And cogitating how in shortest way
He might destroy their peace and comfort clean,
He straight despatched towards the happy isle,
From farthest hell, a wicked wizard vile.

John Barleycorn—such was the wizard's name—
In guise of modern Pharisee appeared,
With face that glowed as it were in a flame,
And eye that looked a little red and bleared ;
An ample cloak enveloped aye his frame,
As if the coldness of the clime he feared ;
And so unsteady was his gait and awkward,
The road was oft too narrow for the blackguard.

At times he seemed extravagantly glad,
And talked as if his tongue would never stop ;
At other times he looked quite grave and sad,
Like one that in a fit of "blues" doth mope ;
Then from a precious bottle which he had
Lodged in his pouch, he'd take a swilling drop,
Which made his tongue once more to go with glee,
Such virtue in that bottle seemed to be.

As when a C———h doth his gifts display,
The vulgar crowd to him from far and near,
And press around to catch what he will say,
With gaping mouth and greedy eye and ear ;
So flocked the natives in their hodden grey,
This subtle minister of vice to hear,
Who with enticing words and ready smile,
Harangued his audience in the following style :—

“Natives of this romantic spot, that lies
Amid the deep, so pleasant to the view,
Striking the passing seaman with surprise,
So like an emerald encased in blue,
And which, though placed beneath inclement skies,
Might still be made a happier spot for you,
I have come hither from a distant land,
Your precious souls with knowledge to expand.

“In ignorance, alas ! ye seem to be
Of that which forms man’s highest bliss on earth,
And which hath power, you may rely on me,
To fill your souls with constant joy and mirth ;
’Tis this which gleaming in my hand you see,
Clear as the crystal fountain at its birth.”
And from his bottle here a draught he took
And smacked his thin lips with a knowing look.

“Yes,” he exclaimed, continuing his address,
While his eye sparkled with the liquid strong,
“This is the source of real happiness,
The fount of inspiration and of song,
Which greatest bards have all been found to bless,
And laud in strains that shall continue long
To touch in every breast an answering chord,
And charm from time to time the festive board.

But it would take a volume to declare
How exquisite this liquor is and good—
How, with its other countless virtues rare,
It answers as a substitute for food ;
How, too, it drives away all grief and care,
And puts the spirits in a joyous mood,
Oft kindling wit, where it was ne’er before,
Whose flashes set the table in a roar.

With help of it, too, you can bravely face
And at defiance set all wicked sprites,
Such as hobgoblins and the fairy race
That on the green sward dance on summer nights,

And steal away your wives, and in their place
Leave sickly spectres that are perfect frights ;
Nay, you may fearless keep, with its assistance,
Old Nick himself at a respectful distance.

I from my soul do pity your sad plight,
Grubbing in earth, or dabbling in the sea,
Like veriest slaves ye toil from morn to night,
And still ye seem in abject poverty,
Without the least enjoyment or delight ;
But if you'll now be guided just by me,
I'll teach you how to brew this precious 'drappy,'
Which will enrich you all, and make you happy."

He ended—and a loud assenting cheer
Rose from the motley multitude around,
That o'er the island echoed far and near,
And frightened all the seafowl with the sound ;
The men their night-caps and south-westers queer
Waved round their heads, and capered on the ground,
The old wives tossed in air their flannel "toys,"
Giggled the girls, and clapped their hands the boys.

To work the wizard went without delay,
Like one that doth his business understand,
And ere that you "Jack Robison" could say,
By simply waving once or twice a wand,
And muttering something o'er a piece of clay,
Without an anvil, hammer, forge, or brand,
He fashioned forth an ample copper kettle
Ready for use, and of the finest metal.

Next to the wondering natives did he show
Of fermentation all the process nice—
A tedious process as distillers know,
But which he deftly managed in a trice ;
Then on the fire he set the "still," when, lo !
Forth from the vessel's lengthened orifice
There flowed a goodly liquor to the view,
Of finest flavour and celestial hue.

The foolish people tasted it, and found
It was a cordial worthy of desire,
For through the veins it made the blood to bound,
And warmed the stomach with a grateful fire ;
While in the brain, with all its organs crowned,
Such blissful fancies did the fumes inspire,
They thought themselves the happiest souls on earth,
And danced and shouted through excess of mirth.

Such witchery in the liquor seemed to be,
The natives now were seldom sober found ;
From morn to eve they drank incessantly,
Till oft they could not walk upon the ground,
Or one another o'er their bottles see ;
Then would they lie whole hours in sleep profound,
And when they woke at length with aching brain,
Like dogs they to their vomit flew again.

Sometimes they quarrelled and up rose to fight,
Fiercely resolved each other's blood to shed,
And thumped and thrashed away with all their might,
Until their noses most profusely bled,
And with the cruel boxing, black as night,
Their eyes were almost hidden in their head ;
While wives and bairns (no doubt the case was trying)
Set up a hideous skirling and a crying.

There was a famous minstrel in the isle,
Minus a leg, through some marine mishap,
Who played the bagpipe in the finest style,
A comical and most amusing chap—
Him did the wizard with enchanting smile
Into his power quite easily entrap ;
For with the chanter ever in his mouth
He needed something still to quench his "drouth."

So when the merry piper did begin
To play, and with his one foot thump the floor,
At every pause he sucked the liquor in,
And aye the more he blew he drank the more,

Till oft in midst of his melodious din,
As if some sudden cramp had seized him sore,
He'd drop the inflated bag upon the ground,
Which puffed its breath out with a squealing sound.

The wizard found him for his purpose fit,
And therefore took the piper in his pay,
Who now from house to house did nimbly flit
Upon his crutches whistling all the way ;
Then by the "blazing ingle" would he sit,
And keep the natives dancing night and day,
While round among them flowed the inspiring liquor
In broken-footed glass, and cup, and "bicker."

At length, so much they loved the wizard dire,
And his enchanting cup of mountain dew,
The cursed still was never off the fire
Sunday or Saturday the whole year through ;
More senseless than the brutes in fold or byre,
They made in whisky all the grain they grew,
So that most piteous was their situation,
Yclad in rags and bordering on starvation.

At this time lived a celebrated Knight,
Sir Torquil called, who roamed from place to place,
Waging incessant warfare day and night
'Gainst spirits that delude the human race ;
So puissant was his arm and skilled in fight,
He'd dare the fellest demon to his face,
And in a twinkling make him "cut his stick,"
Down to the horrid dungeons of Old Nick.

So when the natives' lamentable state
Was first by fame loud bruited in his ear,
The generous knight felt indignation great
Boil in his breast, and shed for them a tear ;
Then buckling on his helmet and breast-plate,
He swore by heaven and his good sword he'd steer
Without delay for the enchanted isle,
And punish that infernal wizard vile.

'Twas now the gay and gorgeous month of June,
In all its majesty and splendour proud ;
The songsters of the grove were all in tune,
And piped and whistled 'mong the branches loud,
Scarce pausing at the drowsy hour of noon ;
While soaring high above the feathered crowd,
The lyric lark poured down his joyous ditty
To cheer his mate and callow younglings pretty.

In richest verdure blooming on the sight,
Were decked the fields with flowers of every hue,
With yellow buttercups and daisies white,
And lovely violets in garb of blue,
Which Flora tripping by on footstep light
In lavish handfuls from her basket threw,
Filling the air with thousand odours sweet,
'Mongst which the wild bee has a luscious treat.

And o'er the bosom of the halcyon brine,
Whose angry billows now were charmed to rest,
The seafowl wheeling in the bright sunshine,
Their joy in rude discordant screams expressed,
The wild gull laughed—and from the burning line
To the bleak pole in snowy mantle dressed,
Each living creature, with which earth is rife,
Seemed as inspired and glowing with new life.

'Twas in this charming season of the year,
The carnival of nature and the muse,
When seas are calm, and summer skies are clear,
Our knight set out on his adventurous cruise,
In a small yacht, provisioned with good cheer,
The fittest for his purpose he could choose,
And shaped his course in a north-west direction,
While all things round him wore a fair complexion.

The god of winds propitiously did smile,
And from his cave sent forth a friendly breeze,
Which wafted him along in finest style,
Its power increasing gently by degrees ;

And now the good knight safely reached the isle,
And landed on the rugged beach with ease,
When he beheld the sorcerer advance,
Wrapt in his cloak, and knew the fiend at once.

With well feigned look of gladness in his face,
The wily wizard now approached the knight,
And strove to clasp him in a close embrace,
And in this way to captive him outright ;
But good Sir Torquil, by the power of grace,
Was proof 'gainst all his fascinating might,
And in an instant drew his trusty brand,
Which flashed like keenest lightning in his hand.

“Avaunt !” he cried, “thou cursed demon foul !
Thou treacherous spirit vile beyond compare !
Who by the sorcery of thy poisoned bowl,
Destroy'st thy wretched victims everywhere,
Ruining at once the body and the soul ;
Whose breath, like pestilence, pollutes the air—
For thy deserts, by heaven ! I'll make thee feel
The edge and weight of this avenging steel.”

At this the wizard looked a little blue,
And tried again to circumvent the knight ;
But brave Sir Torquil, to his purpose true,
Attacked him instantly with all his might,
And with his matchless weapon pierced him through,
When, like a fiery ball, he took to flight,
And, as he fled, he uttered a loud shriek
That twenty good miles off was heard at Wick.

Now everywhere throughout the island round
Sir Torquil searched, when, horrible to say,
A still at work in every house he found,
The natives drunk in middle of the day—
Some singing loud, and others snoring sound,
Upon the floor that like a gutter lay,
Which filled the knight with sorrow and surprise,
And once more made his kindling choler rise.

Then with his arm, so vigorous and stout,
He smashed the pots in which the drink was brewed,
And poured the ale and low wines all about,
And on the ground the malted barley strewed,
On which the porkers, with delighted snout,
And grunt that spoke their heart-felt gratitude,
Amplly regaled, until they too got jolly
And cut strange capers in their drunken folly.

And certes 'twas a most diverting sight,
And one might cure the sulkiest fit of spleen,
To see beneath the sky of June so bright,
The lean and bristly quadrupeds unclean
Tumble along the ground, and squeak and bite,
With tusks like bodkins cruelly sharp, I ween ;
At such a comic Bacchanalian rout,
Sir Knight himself could scarce help laughing out.

Lastly, the piper's instrument he took,
And with his sabre cut the bag quite through,
Whereat the piper like an aspen shook,
With doleful phiz and cheek of ashy hue ;
In short, most truly piteous was the look
That on the formidable knight he threw,
Exclaiming that he'd put him in a fever,
Destroyed his pipe, and ruined him for ever.

Meantime the natives, gathering round the knight,
Brandished their sticks, and swore they'd knock him down,
But soon were awed to meekness at the sight
Of his drawn sabre and commanding frown ;
Then while they stood agape, a sorry sight,
Much like the squalid rabble of a town,
Sir Torquil felt compassion touch his breast,
And thus the infatuated crowd addressed :

“ Unhappy wretches ! much I grieve to say,
You've been deluded by yon demon vile,
Whom I have vanquished and expelled to-day,
With all his arts of sorcery and guile,

Ne'er to return again to lead astray,
I trust in heaven, the natives of this isle,
Who now by sad experience, I should think,
See cause to curse him and his hated drink..

With his rank poison brewed at first in hell,
Has not the fiend besotted all your brains ;
Ruined your health (if ye the truth would tell),
And filled your bodies with unnumbered pains ;
Nay, thrown around you such a horrid spell,
Aided by that vile piper's squeaking strains,
That you have lost all feeling of propriety,
And all regard for virtue and sobriety ?

Now, if your senses you'd once more regain,
And be as happy as you were before
That graceless wizard with his hellish train
Of black enchantments visited your shore,
You must from smuggling totally abstain,
And all your tippling practices give o'er,
And, above all, 'tis an essential matter,
Restrict yourselves entirely unto water,

Which is the purest liquid in creation,
The primal beverage ordained by heaven,
Flowing quite free in every clime and nation—
The first to Adam and his consort given,
Ere the frail pair were guilty of transgression,
And from their paradise of bliss were driven ;
So 'twas man's drink in times of great antiquity,
Before the world had lapsed into iniquity.

As for its virtues, 'tis enough to say
It keeps the brain and intellect quite clear,
And all the functions too in healthful play,
Like to a good machine, from year to year,
So that, with age until your heads grow grey,
No rising qualm of sickness you need fear,
While you may laugh at doctors and their drugs,
As all a set of exquisite humbugs."

Thus spoke the knight, and the repentant crowd,
Struck with the truth and force of what he said,
Wept tears of sorrow and confessed aloud,
That by the infernal sprite they'd been betrayed,
But, having seen their error, they avowed,
With the Almighty's sovereign grace and aid,
They would no more engage in distillation,
But lead a life of thorough reformation.

His mission o'er, Sir Torquil home did hie
In his light bark careering o'er the deep,
For now the sun was posting down the sky
In ocean's bed to take his nightly sleep.
Meantime the moon uprose, with radiant eye,
Her stated watch o'er sea and land to keep,
And walked her course in heaven with matchless grace,
And virgin sweetness breathing from her face.

"THE ENCHANTED ISLAND." The island of Stroma, in the Pentland Firth, was a few years ago notorious for illicit distillation. After many fruitless attempts to put down this demoralizing traffic, it was at length finally suppressed by Mr Terence M'Mahon, an active officer of Excise from Ireland. The result, as might be expected, has been a happy improvement in the morals and manners of the inhabitants. The poem, though a *jeu d'esprit*, will be found, it is hoped, to possess a good moral.

Helen of Braemore.

'Tis summer eve—the setting sun goes down,
Gilding yon mountains desolate and brown,
That giant-like in naked grandeur soar
Above thy sweet secluded glen Braemore !
Lo ! in the midst, uprising like a cone,
Stands the proud Pap, fantastic and alone.
With long dark belt, magnificent and high,
The shadowy Scaraben is swelling nigh ;
While o'er the whole in eminence and height,
Majestic Morven towers upon the sight,
Capp'd with the cloud that—beauteous to behold—
Looks like a glittering diadem of gold.

The happy lark that carolled all the day
O'er mead and moor, hath sung his latest lay,
And the gay linnet, too, hath hushed the note
That flowed so sweetly from his little throat ;
But from the moorland waste, the plover's wail
And curlew's lonely cry are on the gale,
Blent with the snipe's peculiar bleating sound,
And wild bee's dreamy murmur floating round.

But who is she that at the close of day
Trips o'er the greensward like a “ vision gay,”
To meet her lover in the gloaming bright,
Her youthful features beaming with delight ?
'Tis Helen Gunn, the beauty of Braemore,
Whose fame hath gone to many a distant shore.
Fain would the muse pourtray that lovely maid,
In nature's own simplicity arrayed.
Her native Highland plaid disposed with care,
Adorns the figure of the charming fair,

And falls around her in a graceful fold,
Clasped at the bosom with a brooch of gold.
The silken snood confines her raven hair,
That clusters richly round her forehead fair.
But who the sweetness of her face may speak ?
The rose-like bloom upon her virgin cheek—
The large dark eye, so beautiful and bright,
Whose lustre fills the gazer with delight—
The oval countenance—the snow-white brow—
And honied lips, where love sits smiling now.
And then her voice's music, when she sung
Some touching ballad in her native tongue,
Flowed with a dulcet melody and swell,
That bound the ear in a delicious spell.

Like a sweet wild-flower blooming in the shade,
The Keith's rude Chieftain saw the lovely maid,
Her form, where grace and beauty seemed to vie,
At once attracted his licentious eye.
Inflamed with ardent passion, much he strove
From time to time to gain the lady's love ;
But still a deaf ear to his suit she turned,
And all his offers resolutely spurned.
So when he found that all his practised art
And flattery failed to touch the maiden's heart,
With wounded pride and keen resentment fired,
A dubious threat he uttered and retired.

Among the hills that tower so proudly up,
There lay a glen embosomed like a cup—
A sweet, romantic spot beyond compare,
Where oft the straggling wild deer made their lair ;
The mountain-daisy and the heather-bell
Were thickly scattered o'er the fairy dell,
With many a bright and nameless flower beside,
That yearly budded there, and bloomed, and died.
In this secluded spot, when day was done,
Sat Helen and her lover, Alick Gunn.
Her kinsman he, a sprightly youth and fair—
'Twas long since they in heart affianced were.

While yet but children sporting in the glen,
They seemed as destined for each other *then*.
Still hand in hand were seen the little pair,
Prattling together without thought or care.
They ne'er were separate ; and, on sunny days,
They played together on the broomy braes ;
Oft chased the painted butterfly and bee,
And laughed and shouted in their sportive glee.
And when, at length, a hardy stripling grown,
If Alick chanced to roam abroad alone,
The exulting boy would bring home with him still,
For her, the choicest berries of the hill,
Some moorfowl's eggs, or bunch of scented thyme,
With radiant wild flowers, gathered in their prime
Along the lofty Scaraben and Pap,
And lay the treasure in his favourite's lap.
Their love grew stronger as they grew in years,
Without that passion's jealousies and fears,
For life as yet was all a happy dream,
Radiant with fancy's first and brightest beam ;
While hope still pointed with a smile of joy
To future years of bliss without alloy.

In Corriechoich's romantic bosom fair,
At early gloaming sat the youthful pair.
Whate'er the cause, on Alick's manly brow
A cloud of anxious thought seemed resting now,
And oft a struggling sigh escaped his breast,
That told how much his spirit was depressed.
The kindly maiden prayed the youth to tell
If aught distressed him, if he felt unwell.
" My dearest Helen, if I seem to be
More sad than wont, 'tis all for sake of thee.
'Tis said the Keith has offered thee his hand,
With all his wealth, and heritage, and land ;
And, though I scarce can doubt thy plighted faith,
To me the torturing thought is worse than death."

" My Alick, why thus needlessly cast down ?
Distrust me not, my heart is still thine own.

Oh ! I would sooner die than wed that man,
Who bears the name of a detested clan.
Thou dost remember ('tis a tale of woe
To make the heart sick, and the tears to flow,)
How, in the bloody Chapel of St Tayre,
Our sires by them most foully butchered were.
No, no, the Keith need not excite thy fears,
Heaven is my witness, and these truthful tears !
I love him not—his bride I ne'er shall be,
His suit is hateful as his race to me ;
No one on earth shall wed me 'gainst my will,
The heart I gave thee once thou hast it still."

" And is thy young heart still my own ? O ! then,
I am to-night the happiest of men ;
I wronged thee Helen—but 'twas the excess
Of love too strong for language to express ;
Yes, love the deepest and the most unfeigned,
With not one gross or selfish feeling stained—
'Twas love that gave these jealous fears their birth,
And dashed with shade my brightest dream on earth.
Then let me clasp thee once more to my breast,
Since all those anxious cares are laid to rest."

Before the lovers parted for the night,
Beneath the holy stars that burned so bright,
'Twas fixed that they within a month should wed—
How oft they wished that long, long month were fled.

The moon is up, and beautiful and bright
Pours o'er the lonely glen a flood of light.
In dazzling masses piled against the sky,
The lofty mountains wear a look of joy ;
The moorland stream is glancing in her rays,
And near at hand the honest watch-dog bays.
In yon ancestral hall are sounds of mirth,
Which seems to-night the happiest home on earth ;
For now, in all her beauty's bloom and pride,
The lovely Helen is become a bride.

The wine-cup circles round the guests to cheer,
The bagpipe's notes are thrilling on the ear ;
And many a foot is tripping it with glee,
And all is gladness there and revelry.
There comes no thought of harm to cloud their joy,
"On with the dance," and fill the wine-cup high.

Among the guests, tho' blind and aged now,
None happier seemed that night than Evan Gow,
The grey-haired bard, who many a night before
Had sung the joys and sorrows of Braemore.
Cheered with the mirth that did each breast inspire,
He caught a portion of his former fire,
And in a voice unbroken yet and strong,
Thus poured his rude extemporaneous song :—

THE BARD'S SONG.

The harp that has rung with the strains of the fight,
Shall to beauty and love be devoted to night ;
For the maiden is wed that we all did adore,
The pride of our valley, the flower of Braemore.

As the stately foxglove with its bright purple bell,
Outstrips all the flowers in the desert and dell,
So the sweet Helen Gunn, with her beauty so rare,
Excels all our maidens, the flower of our fair.

Her locks with the raven in darkness may vie,
And dark is the hue of her beautiful eye,
And sweet is her breath as the fragrance that flows
From our own native thyme, in the moorland that grows.

Tho' here we are all full of joy and delight,
There are hearts in the glen that are breaking to-night ;
And many a sigh, from the sad bosom wrung,
Is heaving for Helen the charming and young.

The Keith, in the lowlands, that dastard abhorred,
For the loss of the maiden may brandish his sword ;
But we mind not his threats—let him come to Braemore,
And we'll give him a taste of the Highland claymore.

May the choicest of blessings descend from above,
On the gallant young man and his dear ladye love ;
And long may they flourish in beauty and pride,
Like the ash and the birch on yon green mountain side.

There is a hireling band of armed men,
With stealthy footsteps marching through the glen,
And at their head on fiery barb is seen
A fearless chief of dark and daring mien.
There is a wild impatience in his look,
That no impediment would seem to brook ;
His brow is knit—and oft his eye of fire
Flashes with fury and indignant ire.
In his stern visage one may clearly read
That man is bent upon some desperate deed.

What sudden sight arrests the eyes of all ?
That *gloomy* leader stalks into the hall :
Alone he enters there, without his band,
The ruthless falchion glittering in his hand.
At first the revellers in mute surprise
Survey the unbidden guest that damps their joys ;
But rage soon takes possession of each breast,
And dread confusion reigns around the feast,
When Keith—'twas he himself—with daring brow,
Thus speaks the purpose of his visit now :—
“ I come to claim this lady as my bride ;
Nay, frown not so—I will not be denied—
But dare to thwart my will, and by the rood,
I'll make each craven here the eagle's food !”
“ Strike down the braggart !” was the general cry,
“ By heaven, the treacherous Keith deserves to die !”
Scarcely said the words, when forth the chieftain drew
A silver mounted horn, and quickly blew
A shrill and startling summons ;—at the call
His banded followers rush into the hall.
Instant ensues a fierce and bloody fray,
Too darkly wild and tragic to pourtray

The clash of swords and shouts of men arise,
Mingled with women's wild heart-rending cries.
The gallant Gunns, tho' few, fight nobly all ;
But, in the end, o'erpowered and butchered fall.
Among the rest, the bridegroom on the floor,
Pierced deep with wounds, lies weltering in his gore.
But who may paint the anguish of the bride ?
Ah, happier far, if she then too had died !
In frantic agony she tore her hair,
That fell dishevelled round her forehead fair,
And prayed to heaven to avenge this deed of blood,
And smite the ruthless murderers where they stood.
In vain she wept—in vain to heaven did pray—
Distracted, screaming, she is borne away,
By the fell hands that laid her bridegroom low,
To drink on earth the bitterest cup of woe.

In tower of Ackergill, whose massy hold
Looks o'er you noble bay—so grim and old—
The beauteous Helen weeps the hours away,
Her once dark ringlets are already grey.
The wretched captive, pale and woe begone,
And sick with suffering makes her plaint to none ;
But inly hopes that death will shortly close
Her life's dark span with all its nameless woes.
Her cell-like chamber has one narrow pane,
That fronts the blue and melancholy main ;
The rays of heaven but faintly light the room,
And scarce a sound of gladness cheers the gloom.
From morn to night, within that chamber lone,
She only hears the wild, wild billow moan,
Or burst around her, with terrific roar,
When the storm visiteth that desert shore.
If to her sad and lonely couch she goes,
To seek a brief oblivion of her woes,
Her sleep is troubled,—to her mental sight
Still busy fancy paints her wedding night,
And the wild tragedy seems acted o'er,
With all its fearful horrors, in Braemore.

The Keith still tried her widowed heart to gain,
His threats and blandishments were all in vain ;
She turned from him with loathing and disgust,
Her heart was his that slumbered in the dust.

In this sad state of wretchedness and fear,
No eye to pity, and no voice to cheer,
Two months she now had spent, and day by day,
The lonely mourner seemed to pine away,
Like a sweet flower that withers on the sight,
Nipt in the blossom by untimely blight ;
So Helen sunk and faded to the tomb,
A virgin flower in brighter climes to bloom.

Birkie's Bridal.

Fy, let us a' to the Bridal,
For there will be liltin' there.

Old Song.

I.

MUSE of the social, mirth-inspiring face,
Who dost o'er festive scenes thy spirit fling,
Once more I ask thy countenance and grace,
While by the Pentland Firth I strive to sing
In truthful verse, rejecting fabled story,
A country wedding in its pristine glory.

II.

A merry bridal—such as used to be
At John O'Groat's in days of "auld lang syne,"
Ere steam was known, or ships were seen to flee
'Gainst wind and tide, along the azure brine ;
Or railway trains went sixty miles an hour—
A sight would make our simple grandsires glower.

III.

When dreary winter comes with chilling eye,
And blustering Boreas like a maniac raves—
Hurling his sleety showers along the sky,
And fiercely stirring up the Pentland waves,
'Tis now, when gloom o'erspreadeth sea and land,
Our lads and lasses link in Hymen's band.

IV.

'Tis at this season that they pair for life,
 For now the harvest and the fishing's o'er,
 And herrings and potatoes both are rife,
 And sellocks swarm in thousands round the shore ;
 So, as our youth find little else worth doing,
 They 've time enough to smoke and go a-wooing.

V.

Therefore, I think, 'tis wise in them to wed,
 And follow up the good old Scripture rule,
 Despite what Malthus on the point has said,
 And others of that queer newfangled school,
 Whose "moral check" looks very like a libel
 On Providence itself, as well 's the Bible.

VI.

But to our wedding. Our bridegroom's a blade,
 Whose match for many miles you will not find,
 BIRKIE his name—a sutor to his trade,
 But quite a genius of the rarest kind,
 With fertile brain, still full of scheme and project,
 And much renowned for cleverness and *logic*.

VIII.

The bride's a beauty—we've but few to spare—
 A genuine beauty of the Scottish cast,
 With cherry cheeks, blue eyes, and yellow hair,
 And skin like milk, in whiteness unsurpassed—
 A clean, well-footed dame of proper size,
 That any mortal man might deem a prize.

VIII.

At fairs and dancings she was much admired,
 And had of course a host of rustic beaux,
 Who strove about her, when with drink inspired,
 And gave each other many cruel blows ;
 Each emulous the blooming nymph to gain,
 Which made her, you may guess, a little vain.

IX.

There were Jock Reid, the wright, and "Weaver Will,"
Brunty the smith, and "Davie i' the Park,"
And young Braehead, that dearly likes a gill,
And tailor Twist—a very dressy spark,
And Andrew Cock the pilot, and Bob Graham,
With many more I have not time to name.

X.

But gallant Crispin out manœuvred all
The rival suitors that around her clung ;
For, though his powers as pugilist were small,
He had a matchless talent at the tongue ;
So he one night, behind the long peat stack,
Got Nell's consent, and sealed it with a smack.

XI.

The banns are published, and the wedding day
Is duly fixed, and every thing is ready,
And Willie Skirlie is engaged to play—
A country piper, popular and steady,
With power of wind, as I have heard it stated,
To keep the sheep-skin bag for weeks inflated.

XII.

The 'customed feet-washing took place last night,
When all the nearest friends were at the "ploy,"
And they'd a snug bit feast with candle light,
And much the party did themselves enjoy ;
But, dawns the bridal morn, and you'll remember,
A bright one 'tis in month of bleak December.

XIII.

The winter sun shines cheerly from the sky ;
The ground is mantled in a robe of snow,
That crisply glitters to the dazzled eye,
With million sparkling gems—a beauteous show—
Filling the bounding bosom with delight,
Although the keen air feels as it would bite.

XIV.

Behold the marvellous doings of John Frost—
That unseen artist of surpassing powers ;
The very window pane he hath embossed
In fancifullest style, with shrubs and flowers,
Forming a silver tissue, such as ne'er
Came from the fingers of a lady fair.

XV.

And from the cottage eaves, in glittering rows,
The frozen icicles depend like spears ;
And, as the slanting sunbeam warmer grows,
From every point a crystal drop appears,
Which, slowly melting, trickles on the ground,
Where honest robin redbreast hops around.

XVI.

The brook that lately ran toward the main
From the brown moorlands, with a gurgling sound,
Lies mute and fettered in an icy chain—
As hard as 'twere a piece of solid ground ;
And noisy urchins, as they wend to school,
Now slide on it and every glassy pool.

XVII.

Diverted with the strangely beauteous show,
The youthful cottage cur, of collie race,
Runs poking with his nose among the snow—
Rolls, shakes himself, and now, in playful chase,
Attacks the fowls, that from the barn door hurry,
All loudly screaming in a dreadful flurry.

XVIII.

But I digress—so to our bridal tale :—
Our guests have met and breakfasted, I find,
On buttered fish, eggs, scones, oat cakes, and ale,
(No tea or flummery there of any kind),
And now, before they start, to keep them frisky,
They get a “caulker” each of smuggled whisky.

XIX.

The bride and bridegroom, in their best array,
In separate parties to the altar go—
For they each other must not see to-day,
Until they meet before the priest, you know ;
Such sight would not be lucky, they believe,
And to this creed our vulgar firmly cleave.

XX.

With her attendants first arrives the bride,
Blushing in beauty like a sweet wild rose ;
Then comes the spruce bridegroom with step of pride,
Followed by his long train of belles and beaux ;
The whole amounting, as in church they meet,
To fourscore pairs, in wedding rig complete.

XXI.

The lasses all, as well 's the bride, are dressed
In muslin gowns of spotless white to-day,
Encircled with a ribbon round the waist,
And on their heads, with ribbons also gay,
Nice cambric caps, in newest fashion swell,
Which quite bewitching make each rustic belle.

XXII.

The hymeneal knot at length is tied,
And now the gay procession homeward steer ;
The piper, with his cheeks distended wide,
Bangs up a merry tune, the way to cheer,—
For Willie's music, where no note is missed,
Has charms enow to "soothe the savage breast."

XXIII.

From every cottage door the old and young—
Brisk serving lads, and buxom smiling lasses—
Throng out with curious eye and critic tongue,
To see the merry bridal as it passes ;
While here and there some idle rogue, for fun,
Fires off at them a rusty-barreled gun.

XXIV.

They've reached the bridal door ; and, in a trice,
Out steps a matron with an oaten cake,¹
Stuck thick with raisins and with "sweeties" nice,
Which o'er the bride's head she proceeds to break ;
When, lo ! a scramble, that might cure the *blues*,
To catch the fragments, instantly ensues.

XXV.

For each small crumb the virtue hath, it seems,
When 'neath the pillow, snugly laid at night,
Of blessing youths and maidens with love dreams,
And hours of soft endearment and delight,
In that sweet land, ycleped the land of nod,
Which Morpheus rules o'er with his magic rod.

XXVI.

Next, entering in, they every one receive
A brimming glass of genuine usqubae,
In Stroma brewed, without the gauger's leave,
And *cannily* brought o'er the other day,
The real peat-reek stingo, past dispute,
Which warms the inner man from head to foot.

XXVII.

And, certes, all of them, both young and old,
But most the lasses, in their muslin dress,
With noses red as scarlet with the cold,
Need much a drop of liquor, I confess :
For all the day it hath not ceased to freeze,
And strong of Greenland smells the cutting breeze.

XXVIII.

Along the barn, with forms on either side,
Propped up with stones, two ample benches stretch,
Graced with a linen web—the housewife's pride—
Which by the burn lay many a day to bleach ;
On this the smoking dishes ranged are seen—
A grateful sight to all the guests I ween.

XXIX.

Like two dull planets winking through the haze,
From each end of the barn a lamp doth throw,
Replete with cudden oil, its sickly rays
Around the guests that throng the floor below,
Their countenances beaming bright with joy,
Albeit the lasses look a little coy.

XXX.

They all are seated ; and the bridegroom now
Whispers the elder, who, with serious face,
Placing his hand across his reverend brow,
Spins out an orthodox and lengthy grace ;
This done, the party, sharp-set with their walk,
The goodly viands lustily attack.

XXXI.

Pork and potatoes are excluded both,
As much too common for our bridal feast,
But there's abundance of good barley broth,
And young stot beef, the fattest and the best,
And dark-complexioned, shore-fed mutton rare,
That smacks, methinks, a little of the ware.

XXXII.

And there's of potted geese a good supply,
Fed on the stubble field, fine sappy "brods,"*
And plump howtowdies that would charm the eye,
If aught would do it, of the famed Meg Dods—
All richly swimming in a sea of gravy,
Enough to float the Lilliputian navy.

XXXIII.

Nor is there wanting plenty of oat-cakes,
Piled up in baskets, worthy of a song—
The good substantial article that makes
The Scottish peasant sinewy and strong,
And fit to labour at his daily toil,
To wield the flail or delve the rugged soil.

* Brods—in the provincial patois—geese that have gone through the process of incubation, and reared a family.

XXXIV.

The pewter plates are rather scarce, you see,
But that's a thing they do not seem to mind,
For round the board two guests, and sometimes three,
(Their simple manners not yet grown refined)
In the same plate, all squeamishness defying,
Their ram-horn spoons are vigorously plying.

XXXV.

Though of the banquet the acknowledged lord,
The bustling bridegroom sits not down to eat,
But, with the "best man," waits the festive board,
Hands in each dish, and sees they all have meat ;
Such is the custom in our northern clime,
And such it was from immemorial time.

XXXVI.

Placed at the upper end—the "sornie"* near—
Between her two best maids the bride doth sit,
But, though there is abundance of good cheer.
The modest bride can scarcely eat a bit ;
Nay, all the pretty lasses, strange to say,
Seem to have lost their appetites to-day.

XXXVII.

Not so the married dames—they wisely do
Full justice to the good things of the feast,
For they to *airs* have long since bid adieu,
Nor, like their daughters, do they feel *strait-laced* ;
There's Maggie Mowat, spouse of Jamie Ham,
Already has devoured two pounds of lamb.

XXXVIII.

An honoured guest, the bridal party 'mong,
Here sits the gauger in a green surtout—
A southern blade, who sings a famous song,
And likes his glass, as guagers always do ;
Beside him is a young and blooming hussy,
With whom the sly rogue's flirting very busy.

* Anglice—the hearth and fire-place of the kiln.

XXXIX.

Of his attention she is clearly proud,
And, coyly smiling, turns her head away,
With cheek that blushes like the morning cloud
Which Phœbus paints with his vermillion ray,
When newly flaming 'bove the eastern hill,
He comes with light and joy the world to fill.

XL.

Miss Marion Clash, the spinster, you can see,
Is eying her askance with bitter look,
In which affected scorn and jealousy
Are plainly legible, as in a book ;
The damsel's name she'll soon severely handle,
And treat the public to a dish of scandal.

XLI.

Here, too, deep skilled in Latin and in Greek,
And passing rich on twenty pounds a year,
The dominie, poor soul, with thin, pale cheek,
Enjoys the fun and the abundant cheer ;
And, quite inspired by brisk John Barleycorn,
Keeps up a warm flirtation with Miss Horne.

XLII.

Meantime the " Bride's cog,"² full of best home-brewed—
The reaming swats that Scotia's bard hath sung—
Nappy and brown, with double strength endued,
Circles the board and loosens every tongue ;
And all with great good will, from side to side,
Drink to the happy Bridegroom and the Bride.

XLIII.

A sweet milk kebbuck is set down at last,
Their appetites still further to appease,
But they have made so glorious a repast,
They can do little justice to the cheese ;
And, bent on mirth, the lads and lasses all
Are getting anxious for the coming ball.

XLIV.

Now, for the dance. The barn, with cobwebs graced,
Is cleared of forms and boards without delay,
And, on a high seat by the "sornie" placed,
The piper plants him down and 'gins to play,
And first he skirls up, till the rafters ring,
The appropriate air—"The Bride's a bonny thing."

XLV.

Enlivened with the music's magic sound,
Quick to their feet the lads and lasses start,
And thrash the earthen floor, and nimbly bound
In comic steps, beyond the reach of art,
Acquired in nature's own good simple school,
Which ties the limbs not down to square and rule.

XLVI.

And certes, 'tis a happy sight to see
Some thirty couples take the floor at once,
And set and cross and fling right joyously,
In one long reel—a real "country dance,"
And oft as Willie strikes up a new strain,
Shout, clap their hands, and set to work again.

XLVII.

And ever and anon, to quench their drouth,
And eke the piper's, when he lulls his drones,
The Bride's cog circles round from mouth to mouth,
With plentiful supply of sowed scones—
The only pancakes known at John O'Groat's,
Ere the advent of "Leghorns" and long coats.

XLVIII.

Now for the "White Cockade,"* they shout amain,
When forth steps Peter Rosie from his seat.
And throws a handkerchief on Dolly Bain,
Who with a bashful simper springs to feet;
Brave Peter kisses Dolly, "nothing loth;"
Then, hand in hand, a while they trip it both.

* This peculiar dance, now all but forgotten, was performed to the air called "The White Cockade," and, as may be supposed, was a general favourite with the younger part of the company.

XLIX.

The napkin next on Geordie Warse she throws,
 Who casts it on his sweetheart Kitty Jack ;
 Up Kitty gets—when Geordie, blithe, bestows
 On Kitty's rosy lips a hearty smack ;
 And thus the cambric handkerchief they fling,
 Till all are up and whirling in a ring.

L.

Ye caunting bigots of the present time,
 Foes to all social jollity and mirth,
 Who look on dancing as a sin and crime,
 And would have music banished from the earth ;
 Ye should be bastinadoed on the soles,
 And soused o'er head and ears in quarry holes !

LI.

Meantime from out the crowded barn retired,
 Snug in the "cellar"* sit the married folks,
 And with the nappy, as they get inspired,
 Hand round their "sneeshin mills," and crack their jokes,
 And much they talk of "stryth" and make complaints
 Of late bad fishings and of heavy rents.

LII.

Their tongues run faster aye the more they drink,
 Till, in the end, their eloquence is such
 They gabble all at once, and you would think
 The honest drouthy miller's talking Dutch,
 Or some outlandish speech, on this occasion,
 Which greatly needs, I ween, interpretation.

LIII.

Mirth reigns in-doors—outside no bonfires blaze,
 As when our gentry form the nuptial tie,
 But on our bridal, with their brightest rays,
 The stars, in thousands, sparkle from the sky ;
 And from yon Skerry,† where strong currents muster,
 The Pentland lights flash out with double lustre.

* The principal apartment in the houses of our peasantry.

† The islet on which the "Pentland Skerries' Lighthouse" is erected.

LIV.

And from their home, beyond the Polar Sea,
The merry dancers, too, are out to-night,
And foot it on the floor of heaven with glee,
Showering around their rainbow coloured light,
Up, up the welkin's azure brow to where,
Beside the North Pole stands the guardian bear.

LV.

And, hark ! methinks as they too did rejoice,
Old Neptune's billows round the star-lit shore
Now faintly swell, and now upraise their voice,
Like bacchanals in one loud thundering roar ;
But it is twelve o'clock, and our young pair
Must shortly to their bridal couch repair.

LVI.

And first the Bride is to her chamber led ;
Nor need we wonder that, with hopes and fears,
At this peculiar moment she should shed—
'Tis quite in nature—a few transient tears ;
But, to cheer up her heart, in Birkie stumps,
And, quick undressing, down beside her plumps.

LVII.

Meantime the room is crammed unto the door,
With lads and lasses on each other pressed ;
The stocking 's thrown, and now the cog once more
Circles around 'mid rustic mirth and jest,
And both the Bride and Bridegroom must sit up
And pledge the party in a final cup.

LVIII.

The happy pair are left to their repose ;
And to the barn anew the guests adjourn,
And dance till chanticleer his summons crows,
And lighted household fires begin to burn ;
When to their several homes they all withdraw,
Through plashy roads, amidst a drizzling thaw.

NOTE 1, STANZA XXIV.—“Out steps a matron with an oaten cake.”

The ceremony of breaking the Bride's Cake has, within these few years, fallen into desuetude. The individual who performed it behoved to be a married woman, and the nearest female relative of the bridegroom. The cake, like the “fairs” in Burn's “Holy Fair,” was baked with butter, and further enriched with raisins and “sweeties.” The ceremony always took place out of doors. On the arrival of the company from the church or manse, the relative in question met them in the close, with the cake, which was sometimes partially broken beforehand, wrapt in a towel; and, holding it above the bride's head, she gave it a stroke with her hand, and then shook the contents from the towel among the wedding party. This was followed by a laughable scramble among the lads and lasses, who pressed and struggled about the bride to catch the falling fragments, being all exceedingly anxious to secure a piece of the cake, from its reputed efficacy in suggesting love dreams. Of course, the driest and cleanest spot before the house was chosen for the exhibition of this interesting observance. The cake is now brought in and distributed in small portions to the guests after dinner.

NOTE 2, ST. XLI.—“Meantime the bride's cog full of best home brewed.”

The Bride's Cog, now totally disused, was a large wooden vessel, with two handles, made expressly for the purpose, out of which the wedding ale was drunk. It usually held from three to four Scotch pints; and each guest, after taking a draught, handed it to the person next him, and so on, till it went round the whole company.

Macroary, the Great Preacher.

Such sheets of fire, such claps of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring winds have ne'er been known.

Shak.—King Lear

Among the brightest of our young divines,
The great Macroary like a bonfire shines ;
Bold and intrepid in the sacred cause,
He roars aloud with wonderful applause.
No man of paper, or of method, he—
From all such trammels our divine is free ;
These he esteems but vile restrictive rules,
Acquired in carnal theologic schools,
Not fit to rein a mind of spiritual mould
Like his, so daring and sublimely bold.
Behold the crowds that gather far and near,
This thundering oracle of *wrath* to hear.
When forth he comes, just mounted like Balaam,
But not to bless his hearers, but to d—— !
From every point his long-eared followers come,
Roused at the summons of his gospel-drum.
Behold him now ascend the pulpit stair,
With burning zeal and sanctimonious air !
What lofty carriage in his front appears !
What looks of confidence our preacher wears !
First round the kirk he takes a knowing glance,
To view the *Ladies* and the *Saints* at once ;
Then opes the volume of the sacred book,
With perked-up mouth and reverential look.
The psalm is sung—forth twangs a “ three mile prayer,”
The Highland brogue is in perfection there ;
At every cadence and lugubrious tone
The old wives utter a responsive groan.

This service past—our reverend preacher next
 Turns o'er some chapters, and gives out his text ;
 Then shuts the book with independent air,
 As if his precious brain knew more than's there.
 Now, every breath is hushed to silence mute,
 To hear the bellowings of a matchless b——.
 Fierce as he grows in Cameronian wrath,
 He points the gentry to the downward path ;
 Hurls them, poor souls ! to Satan's fearful pit,
 And roasts the *Moderates* on his kitchen spit !
 Now, may you see our potent preacher jump,
 And thrash the desk with many a desperate thump.
 Fierce and more fierce his awful visage grows—
 Dark vengeance frowns upon his sable brows ;
 Screws up his mouth, and curls his reverend snout,
 Then opes at once a perfect waterspout.
 No mercy now, no Calvinistic grace
 For Leghorn bonnets, bombasin, or lace ;
 But chief umbrellas, being the " Devil's flags,"
 Are d——, and torn to everlasting rags !
 The chosen few behold the rising light
 With gaping wonder and supreme delight ;
 While carnal hearers list with much amaze,
 As when a mule, or gipsy jackass brays.
 Amid the verbal carnage and the flurry,
 Hovers the angry shade of Lindley Murray.
 Now, in the end, this storm of rhetoric past,
 The sole and only blessing comes at last,
 Pronounced with drawl and Puritanic drivel,
 The only clause that 's free from hell and devil.
 Out rush the crowd—the few salute with pride
 Their great high priest, extremely edified ;
 While common sense still wonders at the brass
 And marvellous lungs of such a marvellous *ass*.

NOTE.—The furious zealot, whose portrait has been attempted
 to be drawn in the above lines, got a Government church, and was
 ultimately deposed by the General Assembly for grossimmorality.

Paulina Vandersnooks.

“THE course of true love never did run smooth,”
The saying 's rather hackneyed, I admit ;
But still, as it contains a deal of truth,
I think that I may aptly quote it yet,
Just as the text or moral of this story,
Which, gentle reader, I now lay before you.

In Amsterdam, some fifty years ago,
There lived one Peter Vandersnooks by name,
A very worthy man, as one could know,
And eke a barber of distinguished fame,
Who had at shaving such a happy knack,
That none in Holland could touch him in fact.

He was no common scraper, you must mind,
And then his shop was quite a treat to see,
Stuck round with wigs and blocks of every kind,
And flashy prints in great variety,
Of herring busses, and of great sea fights,
And other very interesting sights.

Though bred a barber, he was not loquacious,
Or given, by any means, to idle talk ;
A very prudent man he was, and cautious,
Alike in conversation and in walk—
Fond of his pipe, and of a glass of gin,
Both which, in *moderation*, are no sin.

In course of time, by industry and care,
Our tonsor did what some folks can do never,
He saved a deal of money, I declare,
And all by scraping chins—the man was clever—
So having made a fortune, as I 've said,
He bade adieu unto the shaving trade.

And straightway bought a dashing country seat,
A stylish villa of two storeys high,
With ample porch and weather-cock complete,
All richly glowing with a yellow dye ;
In short, a house that, what with paint and plaster,
Might served a Baron or a Burgomaster.

He had a garden, too, that charmed the eye,
Containing a variety of flowers
And fruit trees, with a dial, by the bye,
Which, when the sun shone, pointed out the hours,
Besides a dovecot, and a small fish-pond,
Of which the Dutchman seemed exceeding fond.

His wife, I should have mentioned her before,
Was a magnificent and matchless woman
Of twenty stones—perhaps a little more—
A lump of flesh and blood somewhat uncommon,
Whose portly size seemed much increased by lots
(She wore no stays) of ample petticoats.

She stirred, of course, but little from her chair,
So much her corpulence did her encumber—
Twelve hours she spent in bed, devoid of care,
The rest she passed just in a sort of slumber ;
She took her victuals heartily and her noggin—
Her maiden name was Martha Mokolboggin.

Our couple lived quite happily, on the whole,
With only some slight bickerings now and then,
For Peter's vrow was a good natured soul,
And he himself the quietest of men ;
They had no family but an only daughter,
Who was a beauty of the finest water.

Paulina was indeed a charming creature ;
Not tall, nor short, but of the middle size,
A perfect angel both in form and feature,
With bright round face, and roguish, laughing eyes,
And feet that seemed as they were formed in China—
Such was the beautiful, divine Paulina.

Some wondered greatly at the lady's looks ;
And 'twas a little strange, I must confess,
For both Mynheer and Mrs. Vandersnooks
Were much distinguished for their ugliness,
But then they had the greater credit, seeing
They were the parents of so fair a being.

Now, as a thing of course, you may suppose
Our young and fascinating heiress had
A countless host of lovers and of beaux,
The most of whom seemed positively mad,
So smitten were they with her cash and beauty,
And ready all to kiss her very shoe-tie.

They formed, as I have said, a numerous list,
The tenth of whom I have not time to name :
There was Vansnish, the spruce tobacconist,
Vansnip the tailor, too, a knight of fame,
De Scamp, and Quirk, two clever writer chaps,
Though rather partial, both of them, to schnaps.

There was the poet Mynheer Vanderclink,
The very first in Amsterdam they say,
Who spent a deal of paper and much ink
In writing sonnets to her every day ;
And there was also Mynheer Wodenblock,
The engineer, who built windmills like smoke.

And there was Derrick Higginbottom, too,
A gentleman connected with the taws,
Who all the mysteries of science knew,
And taught philosophy with much applause,
The author of an interesting book
On the beauties of the Dutch tongue, which " took."

In person he was somewhat lank and spare,
His age, I think, was forty-five at least ;
He wore, on gala days, a handsome pair
Of buckskin breeches, and a scarlet vest,
An ample broad-tailed tunic of sky-blue,
A wig, cocked hat, and formidable queue.

Now, Miss Paulina, though as fair 's a rose,
Was a provoking damsel sure enough ;
She joked and flirted with her numerous beaux,
But did not care for one of them a snuff ;
Her cruel heart seemed hardened against pity,
Which made some of them fly to Aquavitæ.

Among the suitors, I am glad to say,
The old folks most the dominie esteemed,
As being a steady person every way,
And one whose brain with boundless knowledge teemed ;
And so they very warmly urged the beauty
To take the scholar—'twas her bounden duty.

But Miss, though in the main a duteous daughter,
Seemed not inclined to follow their advice ;
Marriage, said she, was an important matter,
A step that was both delicate and nice ;
Derrick, she granted, was a man of lore,
A decent, douce old chap, and nothing more.

But to take him—she could not think of it—
She 'd live an old maid all her lifetime rather ;
What signified his learning and his wit ?
He was a man that well might be her father ;
The very thought was just enough to kill her—
She would not have him with his weight of siller.

About this time to Amsterdam there came
A dancing-master all the way from France—
Monsieur Narcisse de Piroutte by name —
To teach the Dutch idea how to dance ;
A dapper little fellow, smart and young,
With ample whiskers, and a power of tongue.

The ladies all were vastly taken with him,
He was so very handsome and so clever,
And showed such elasticity of limb,
As they in all their life had witnessed never.
And then his bow, a thing that somewhat rare is,
Was quite enchanting and direct from Paris.

His poll was frizzled with the nicest care,
So were his whiskers, which were really grand,
And of themselves enough to charm the fair,
In any civilized and Christian land ;
And when he danced or tripped along the room,
He spread around him an intense perfume.

Upon his right hand finger, next the little,
He wore a neat and very precious ring,
A present from the Countess de la Spittle,
Whose lovely daughters he had taught last spring ;
In short he was a very killing manikin,
With goslin-green surtout and "breeks" of nankin.

The beautiful Paulina Vandersnooks
('Tis just as well to tell at once the truth),
Was greatly smitten with the dandy's looks,
And thought him quite an interesting youth ;
And he was no less charmed with the young lady,
And Peter's purse, which he deemed his already.

Now Peter, 'twas a prejudice no doubt,
Looked with contempt upon the whole French race,
As being a set of Atheists all throughout,
And fond of frogs, without a spark of grace ;
But dancing-masters, chiefly of that nation,
The barber held in perfect detestation.

And, therefore, honest Peter could not bear
The very sight of Monsieur Pirouette,
Whom he regarded as a puppy rare,
The very greatest he had ever met—
Nay, half suspected that he was a blackguard,
And told young miss so, who looked rather awkward.

He told her further, in the self same breath,
That if she drew up with the worthless brat,
And then should marry him—as sure as death—
(And no one could find fault with him for that)
He 'd look on her as an ungrateful “dyver,”
And cut her off without a single stiver.

Paulina with devout attention heard
The old boy's lecture ; and, when he was done,
Protested she had not the least regard
For Pirouette, or one beneath the sun ;
But really, after all, she said she could not
Think him so bad a young chap, and she *would not*.

One night, soon after, about ten o'clock
(I need not be particular 'bout the date),
It chanced that Peter, when he 'd ta'en his smoke,
Surprised the lovers in a tete-a-tete,
Which spite of his good nature and his caution,
Drove him at once into a desperate passion.

And snatching up a razor that lay near,
He thus the Frenchman valiantly addressed :—
“Der Duyvel, Sir, the next time you come here,
To court my daughter and disturb my rest,
I'll shave your nose off, and your whiskers both ;
I will, by Jove ! you grasshopper, you moth !”

“Pardonnez moi,” screamed the dancing-master.
“Out !” Peter cried, and kicked him to the door,
And off the nimble Frenchman danced much faster
Than ever he did in his life before,
Leaving Paulina to her meditation,
Who wept, poor thing, a little with vexation.

News of the fracas very soon got out,
And caused a deal of laughing everywhere ;
The young jades all set up a giggling shout,
And talked incessantly of the affair,
Which was to them a greater treat than honey,
And, of a truth, 'twas no doubt rather funny.

As for Paulina, you 'll no doubt suppose
She took to bed with very grief and shame ;
Not so—our heroine was none of those
That yield to such,—she was a self-willed dame ;
So she determined, in a droll way rather,
To be revenged on her unfeeling father.

Time flew apace, as it has always done,
Sometimes with joy, and sometimes with vexation,
Which is the lot of all beneath the sun,
In every climate, and in every station ;
So I wont moralize more on the matter,
But just return unto the barber's daughter.

The affair which had created so much sport—
That 'twixt the Frenchman and her sire I mean—
Had, like a breeze, blown over, and in short,
The thing was almost as it ne'er had been,
While other gossip, of a newer kind,
Engaged the attention of the *public mind*.

Thus matters stood, till one day when the bell
Was rung for breakfast, as you know 's the case
In families that are regulated well,
But Miss Paulina did not show her face ;
The thing looked rather ominous and odd,
So Peter hastily to her chamber strode.

But what was his vexation and surprise
On entering it to find an empty bed ;
No daughter there—could he believe his eyes ?
He scratched, in dire perplexity, his head,
When looking to the window, woe betide it !
He saw a ladder standing close beside it.

He swore in Dutch a very dreadful oath,
For now the truth flashed on his mind at once
(It was no wonder that the man grew wroth),
The perverse vixen had set off to France ;
She, who had been his darling and his pet,
Had just cloped with Monsieur Pirouette !

Evening Sky.

"Stars, which are the poetry of heaven."—BYRON.

Who meted out yon evening sky,
So bright, so glorious on the eye ? *
Who lighted up these fires on high,
Mysterious, lone,
That still, though ages have rolled by,
Keep burning on ?

The beauteous workmanship divine,
God of creation, all is Thine ;
And this our globe, Thy lower shrine
Of sea and land,
Declares in every trace and line
Thy forming hand.

And O ! though death is in its bowers,
This earth is lovely, too, of ours,
Worthy, Great Spirit ! of thy powers—
A wondrous whole :
Its mountains, waters, woods, and flowers,
Delight the soul.

Yet though 'tis fair unto the eye,
And mortals leave it with a sigh,
What is it ? look upon the sky,
Thou child of care !
A thousand worlds more bright on high
Are rolling there.

And in their pure celestial spheres,
So sweet each shining orb appears,
We think of souls that shed no tears,
And heave no sighs,
But live for ever void of fears,
In endless joys.

Is this a dream ? reflect how God
Hath spread enjoyment, life, abroad
On every spot of earth that's trod,
And then confess,
Each star that shines may be the abode
Of happiness.

God ! who from darkness first didst call
The light that fills yon starry hall ;
Thou Great Artificer of all !
On bended knee
It well becometh us to fall
And worship thee.

Father of Mercies ! endless, vast !
Light of the present—future, past !
We praise thy goodness that thou hast
 To mortals given
The glorious hope—to dwell at last
 With Thee in heaven.

The Angel of the Thunder-Storm.

My home is the big portentous cloud
With its ensign of wrath unfurled,
And I wrap myself in its dunnest shroud
When I speak to the trembling world.

I speak in the east, and I speak in the west,
Every clime is the same to me ;
And I lift up my fearful voice o'er the breast
Of the dark and the stormy sea.

I am heard by the high Cordilleras afar,
That look down on a world below—
By Hecla that burns 'neath the polar star,
In his robe of eternal snow.

The beautiful birds are dumb with affright,
And the beasts seek a covert profound,
To hide themselves from the blasting light,
With its lone and terrible sound.

And a gloomy veil of darkness is spread
O'er the face of the mourning sky ;
While the sun retires 'mid the gathering shade,
At the glance of my piercing eye.

And well may nature turn pale at the sight,
And mortals be filled with dread,
For my flash, as it plays on the brow of night,
Oft strikes in a moment dead.

I split the rock with my bolt of power,
That long with the waves did cope ;
And I rend the proud and the lofty tower
From the base to the quivering top.

And 'tis now, when my startling voice is hurled,
With a roar that may well appal,
That I summon beneath me the prostrate world,
To muse on the Author of all.

The Greek Mourner of Jerusalem.*

EACH day she duly visited the spot
Where he reposed, the gentle and the brave,
And there the mourner, wrapt in bitter thought,
Would sit for hours beside his early grave.

O ! 'twas indeed a deeply touching sight
To see her brooding o'er her sorrow there,
Grief's loveliest image—in the noonday light,
So pale yet beautiful beyond compare.

And she had fondly planted round his tomb,
With woman's delicate and graceful hand,
The sweetest flowers of every hue that bloom
In that once glorious and still holy land.

She was a Greek, and dwelt in Scio's isle,
What time 'twas ravaged by the Moslem foe,
And slaughter—rioting in blood the while—
Turned that fair spot into a scene of woe.

And when her kindred all, before her sight,
Fell 'neath the vile oppressor's murderous blade,
He whom she mourned, beheld her dismal plight,
And, touched with pity, saved the lovely maid.

He won her heart, and she became his bride—
A happy bride—but scarce one month had flown,
When in Jerusalem her young lord died,
And left her there all desolate and lone.

* Founded on an affecting anecdote in "Stephen's Incidents of Travel."

Henceforth she sank, abandoned to despair,
And *now* not friendship's sympathies so kind,
Nor all the hallowed scenes that round her were,
Could soothe the hopeless anguish of her mind.

And still each day, in sunshine and in shade,
Unto his grave the mourner came at noon,
To weep in silence by that narrow bed,
In which she hoped to rest beside him soon.

On the Death of Thomas Campbell,

THE Bard of Hope, to sacred freedom dear,
The last and brightest of that glorious band,
That charmed erewhile with song the British ear,
Has passed away into the silent land.

How high he soared on inspiration's wings,
How thrilled his strains with true poetic fire,
As with a master's hand he swept the strings
Of his majestic and melodious lyre.

While England's speech from living lips doth flow,
While freemen tread her home amid the seas,
Her "meteor flag" in his proud verse shall glow,
Braving alike the "battle and the breeze."

Now 'mong her great illustrious dead he lies,
As well beseems from vulgar clay apart,
For heaven bestowed on him its noblest prize,
The poet's genius and the patriot's heart.

And yet methinks 'twere meeter that he lay
Within his own romantic Scottish land ;
In some sweet spot from bustling life away,
Where wild deer roam, and towering mountains stand.

He 's gone ! the favourite of the lyric muse,
But hearts unborn shall feel his verse's spell,
Where hope and fancy blend their brightest hues—
Shade of immortal Campbell ! fare thee well.

John O'Groat's.

HAIL to thy bleak and stormy strand !
Though kindlier nature cheers thee not,
Thy fame is known in every land,
Thou celebrated spot !

Pilgrims from many a clime afar—
From lands that lie beyond the sea—
Led by thy glowing polar star,
Have come and gazed on thee.

Thou hast no classic dome to show,
No hallowed fane, or sainted shrine ;
But ocean's wildest waves that flow,
And rudest rocks are thine.

Thy music is the Pentland's roar,
Loud bursting over rocks and sands,
Yon headland frowning on the shore,
Thy dome "not made with hands."

On thee no flaunting flowers appear,
Nor fragrant shrubs of southern sky ;
The lowly daisy blooming near
Is all that meets the eye.

But thou hast beauties of thine own ;
When wintry storms have ceased to rave,
How glorious doth the sun go down
Within thy burning wave !

Then comes, with all its balmy power,
Thy summer twilight, long and bright ;
A holy stillness marks the hour,
That 's breathless with delight.

Alas ! since first in life's young day
I saw thy bare and billowy shore,
Years, like a dream, have passed away,
And friends I see no more.

And early hopes that once were bright,
And fancies brighter still than they,
Like fleeting meteors of the night,
Have faded, too, away.

Yet, though thou wak'st ofttimes a sigh,
Though cold and bleak thou dost appear,
With all thy gloom of sea and sky,
Thou still to me art dear.

Yes ! in thy darkest wintry hour,
When storms sweep o'er thee from the pole,
Thy wild waves, thundering in their power,
Give pleasure to the soul.

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